THE FUGITIVE

DECEMBER
1925

SINGLE COPIES
TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

A HISTORY OF THE FUGITIVES AND THE FUGITIVE

by

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(B.S., Boston University, 1928)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the generations we are able to trace the existence of many "little" magazines of poetry and verse, published by groups of poets, who wish to have an organ of expression for their poems or "movements". When the Pre-raphaelites wished to expound their views and publish their verse, they founded the periodical called the Germ, and the Dial articulated the Transcendentalist movement.[1]

More recently there is Poetry, founded by Harriet Monroe, which acted as a mirror for the first Imagists as well as an organ for the introduction of many of the other experimental poetic movements which have sprung into existence since 1912.

We have also the Little Review, the Chap Book, the Mirror, and that "high-pitched instrument of the young intransigeants" published by Alfred Kreymborg entitled Others. Contemporary Verse, Poetry Review of America, the Little Review, and dozens of others might be listed.

In the Bookman of January 1930 Mr. William Troy summarizes the significance of the "little" magazines in America. He says they are voices crying in the wilderness, who are born and die to make free verse.

The Fugitive, published by "the most vigorous and varied of the new southern group",[2] is significantly representative of the deluge of these

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[1] Neilson and Thorndike, A History of English Literature, 381.

[2] Alfred Kreymborg, Our Singing Strength, 563.

poetry magazines, which reached its height in 1917 and still continues to grow.

Louis Untermeyer says that "poetry now ranks as America's first national art"[1], and this is easily apparent, when we consider that in 1915 there were at least five poetry magazines in existence, in 1918 ten, in 1925 thirty-seven, in 1930 forty-six, and in 1931 at least a hundred and sixty such periodicals were brought into existence, some surviving only a few months, although their average life was about three years.[2]

That thousands of manuscripts were submitted in contests conducted by the Nation and other agencies bears out the impression of extensive verse-writing. Much which was in no true sense poetry reached the public through these "little" magazines and many of the magazines were trivial, if not fantastic, yet there is a literary as well as social significance in the contemporaneous activity of several thousands of people who were by intention at least literary artists.[3] "The large number of poets, however, is not more striking than the crusading spirit and the abundance of fresh and original talent they suddenly displayed and the variety of minds and types of interest represented among them. The innovations of the more daring spirits, their abandonment of rhetorical flowers and inherited patterns of thought and feeling, gave tone to the whole field of literary activities; from them came the most conspicuous leaders of the literary revolt."[4]

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[1] Modern American Poetry, 13.

[2] John H. Nelson, Contemporary Trends, 7.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 8.

The importance of some of the poetry magazines that sprang into existence is easily apparent, when we realize that such poets as Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Joyce Kilmer, Ezra Pound, Sara Teasdale, James Stevens, Fred Maddox, Conrad Aiken, Walter de la Mare, T. S. Eliot, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Merrill Moore, Robert Penn Warren, Donald Davidson, and Laura Riding[1] were introduced to the public by these periodicals.

It is quite possible that by the very force and beauty of their songs some of these poets would have made themselves known to the world, but I believe with Harriet Monroe that "only when the creative impulse meets an equally strong impulse of sympathy is the highest achievement possible in any department of human effort".[2] If the existence of even one of the poetry magazines helped promote even one of the poets mentioned above, who would otherwise have remained unknown, the result would justify the publication of them all.

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[1] Author's underlining of the names of the major Fugitive poets.

[2] Harriet Monroe, A Poet's life, 327.

PURPOSE OF THESIS

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This investigation was undertaken (1) because of the interest in literary experimentation which is one of the significant characteristics of the development of modern poetry; (2) to discover the origin of the Fugitives and to trace the group from its formation to the publication of the Fugitive and to its cessation; (3) to interview personally or by correspondence each member of the group so as to secure an authentic and complete account of the Fugitives as a group; (4) to analyze the Fugitive's content, purpose, attitudes, and significance; (5) to study the editorials for the purpose of noting the artistic and philosophic attitudes of the major contributing poets and their contemporary importance as a group and as poets; (6) to discover the place of the Fugitive in the deluge of poetry magazines which have appeared in the past twenty years since 1910; (7) to note the reception of the Fugitive when it first appeared in April 1922; (8) to determine whether the Fugitives, as a group, and individually, have realized and attained in their poetry those principles which they set forth in their editorials, essays, and other published works (sparing, in an attempt to arrive at an impartial decision, no effort to locate and collect every criticism of the Fugitives, whether of praise or disparagement); (9) to create for myself by this study a greater knowledge of contemporary poetic background in order to make an intelligent literary prognosis of this group of contemporary poets and to determine the probability of their

withstanding the test of time and the critical eye of the "passionate few"[1] and permanently representing the twentieth century poetic panorama in the history of American literature.

Despite the fact that there have been two[2] other master's theses written about the Fugitives, this study adds, I believe, to a complete record of this poetic group. Little repetition has occurred in any of the three theses--one written in Nashville, one in New York City, and the third in Boston, Massachusetts.

Mr. Overhall has devoted the greater part of his work to an analysis of the form, style, subject matter, and technique of the Fugitives' poems. Miss Morton has compared and evaluated the poems of the four poets in the group whom she calls the "inner circle".[3]

In this thesis the biographical material will be more completed and up-to-date, additional criticism of the Fugitives and Neo-Fugitives will be presented, and a complete condensation of each issue of the magazine will be included. Each thesis will thus perform a distinct and unique service; each will increase one's understanding of and critical faculty for analyzing the Fugitive and the Fugitives.

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[1] Arnold Bennett, "Why a Classic is a Classic", in Literary Taste and How to Form It, 25.

[2] John H. Overhall, "A Review and Critical Study of The Fugitive", Peabody Teachers College, Nashville, Tennessee, June 1928. Anna Inez Morton, "A Critical Study OF the Fugitive Poets", New York University. 1936.

[3] John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Robert Penn Warren.

INTRODUCTION

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The distinguishing characteristics of the development of modern poetry have been experimentation and fresh conceptions regarding the nature of poetry. Since 1910, when the spirit of modern poetry first became articulate, there have formed at various times and at many different places throughout the country groups of talented men and women, whose purpose, while mainly experimental, has been incidentally to create a fresher beauty, a freer mode of expression, and a deeper understanding of life.

These men and women have formed literary clubs, poetry societies, or intimate groups which merely have met occasionally for the joy of discussing poetry, art, music, and such subjects. From among the more ambitious or courageous individuals and groups came magazines of poetry in which they endeavored to realize their conception of the genuine function and purpose of poetry. Many perished because of financial failure, others because of inefficient management on the part of the editors, still others because of a necessary separation of the members of the group. A great many ceased from lack of merit, material, or sheer exhaustion.

Said Harriet Monroe in 1937 : "Our poets have a grand story to tell, and they are telling it in song and rhythmic words with gusto, power, and beauty. The power and richness of our renaissance is proved

not only by the ever-memorable names I have mentioned, but also by the lesser poets who crowd the twentieth century anthologies, each with a poem or two too good to be forgotten. They are still coming one; never a month but some gifted and ambitious youth demands a hearing with poems which prove his right to it, and which may be the first rays from a rising star. I, who am an editor of a magazine which has closely watched the renaissance of poetry in my country, feel that the future is full of hope, that freedom of subject and method will increase to meet adequately the new speech and new feeling of changing times, and that the poet will be stimulated by the intense sympathy of groups and the appreciation of a gradually growing audience of his fellow-countrymen and the people of other nations."[1]

The appearance at Nashville, Tennessee, April 1922, of the Fugitive, a magazine of poetry, created an interest among book reviewers and critics who, upon its publication, began to look for the characteristics of a new school or "movement".

H. L. Mencken wrote that he was recommending the Fugitive to the attention of other critics and that he was sending a copy of it to Berlin that certain learned men of that city might become acquainted with the ambitions of America's present-day Intelligentsia.[2]

In the same letter, he called the Fugitive "Tennessee's one and only literary production, whose contents were of far more significance

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[1] Harriet Monroe in her address at the P. E. N. Congress at Buenos Aires before the assembled delegation. Cf. ~~also~~ A Poet's Life, 470.

[2] Letter to Anne Rankin, reporter on the Nashville Tennessean. To be found in the clipping book of Merrill Moore.

than the tasteless stuff of the average poetry magazine".

Louis Untermeyer, Robert Graves, William Rose Benet, William Stanley Braithwaite, Dr. Edwin Mims, Christopher Morley, John McClure, Witter Bynner, Alexander Percy, John Gould Fletcher, The Bookman, The Literary Digest, The London Mercury, The New York Times, and The Nation were generous with their praise and evaluation of the Fugitive.

Now that the furore of Revolt against obscure modern poetry has subsided, and a reasonably sane and retrospective grasp of newly discovered principles achieved, the author believes it is an appropriate time to present and review as comprehensively as possible the results obtained by the establishing in Nashville, Tennessee, in April 1922, of the Fugitive.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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In my search for material for this study of the Fugitives I have been assisted by various members of the Group, by members of their families, or by friends. Much valuable information and loans of negatives have been received from various publishing houses.

It is with sincere gratitude that I acknowledge the following: From Merrill Moore a loan of the collected file of the nineteen issues of the Fugitive magazine; a book of clippings from newspapers and periodicals showing the progress of the group from its formation, publication of magazine, cessation, and bibliography of the members of the Group; "The Noise That Time Makes", "Six Sides to a Man", "Sonnets From the Fugitive", "Sonnets from New Directions", "Vanderbilt Masquerader".

I am also indebted to Dr. Moore's sister, Mrs. Helen Cole, Cambridge, Massachusetts, ~~for a personal interview~~ and also to the following for personal interviews:

Professor Allen Tate

Professor William Yandell Elliott

Mr. Robert Lowell Jr., a personal friend of John Crowe Ransom

Mr. Dudley Fitts

Mr. Milton Starr, brother of Alfred Starr

Much valuable information was obtained through correspondence with the various members of the Group and with Professor Gottschalk, former

husband of Laura Riding, and Mrs. J. R. Mayers, sister of Laura Riding, from Mrs. John Trotwood Moore, mother of Merrill Moore, from the Nashville Banner and the Nashville Tennessean.

Libraries:

Vanderbilt, Columbia University, George Peabody College for Teachers

The following publishing houses:

Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Houghton Mifflin Company

Charles Scribner's Sons

I am especially grateful to Professor Austin Warren, the first reader and director of this thesis for his critical aid and his valuable suggestions as to organization, source material, and for his interpretation of the poets and the problems that confront them. Also to Professor Thomas Ray Mather for his interest and encouragement and broadness of vision in permitting a thesis of this nature to be written for the master's degree, when he would have much preferred a less contemporary or more proved subject.

DAWN HONEY

As tortured dawn wi th all its light
Carries dark out in its cold arms
Yellow bees undream themselves
And hum over foggy farms.

Merrill Moore

PART I

HISTORY OF THE *FUGITIVE*

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HISTORY OF THE FUGITIVE

A. Formation of the Group

For several years prior to 1922 an intimate group of men living in Nashville, Tennessee, were accustomed to meet at the home of Sidney Mttron-Hirsch, 3802 Whitland Avenue, for the purpose of discussing philosophy and literature. The group was composed of: John Crowe Ransom, Assistant Professor of English at Vanderbilt University; Allen Tate, a student at the University; James M. Frank, a Nashville business man; Sidney Mttron-Hirsch, a playwright; Stanley Johnson, instructor of English at Vanderbilt; Walter Clyde Curry, Assistant Professor of English at Vanderbilt; and Alec B. Stevenson, a Nashville business man.

Since many of the members of this group were interested in the writing of poetry, it was the custom to exchange among themselves carbon copies of poems which they had written and to criticize in an open discussion the merits and faults of each. At the end of a year or two of these meetings, a large number of poems which had passed the approval of the group had been collected.

One day in March Mr. Hirsch and Mr. Frank conceived the idea of the publication of their poems in the form of a magazine. At the next meeting of the group the philosophers and poets discussed this project, and the result was the organization of the Fugitive group.

B. The Fugitive: A Magazine of Poetry

In the month of April of the year 1922 the first issue appeared. The contributors did not think that the magazine would last very long. In fact, they made no plans for the future of this "little" magazine. The work on the first number was done by a negro printer, and the preface of this first number intimated the timorous hopes of the poets and editors. Not one of them dared to make an a priori judgment as to the success of the Fugitive.

Representative poems of the group were selected for the first issue which appeared in April 1922, published at Nashville and copyrighted by the "Fugitive Publishing Company".

It was a small magazine of thirty-two pages containing seventeen poems. The titles of the poems and the pen-names chosen by the founders of the magazine were:

Ego

Night Voices

To a Lady Celebrating Her Birthday

The Handmaidens

--by Roger Prim

I Have Not Lived

--by Marpha

A Demon Brother

The Dragon Book

Following the Tiger

--by Robin Gallivant

Sermons

An Intellectual's Funeral

The Lighted Veil

--by Jonathan David

To Intellectual Detachment

Sinbad

--by Henry Feathertop

The House of Beauty

To a Wise Man

--by Drimbonigher

The Little Boy Pilgrim

--by L. Oafer

The foreword of the first number struck the tempo of the two succeeding numbers.

"Official exception having been taken by the sovereign people to the mint julep, a literary phrase, known rather euphemistically as Southern Literature, has expired, like any other stream, whose source is stopped up. The demise was not untimely; among other advantages, the Fugitive is enabled to come to birth in Nashville, Tennessee, under a star not entirely unsympathetic. The Fugitive flees from nothing faster than the high caste Brahmins of the Old South. Without raising the question of whether the blood in the veins of its editors runs red, they, at any rate, are not advertising it as blue; indeed, as to pedigree, they cheerfully invite the most unfavorable inference from the circumstance of their anonymity.

"The Fugitive is of very limited circulation, and is supported by subscriptions at the rate of one dollar per subscriber. It will appear

at intervals of one month or more, till three to five numbers have been issued. Beyond that point, the editors, aware of the common mortality, do not venture to publish any hopes they may entertain for the infant as to further tenure of this precarious existence."[1]

It was not evident just then what the Fugitive intended to evolve into, but it appeared as a commendable effort which might eventually make some real contribution to the literature of the country. There was something of the fire and vigor of the conscious crusader in the lines of some of the writers in the Fugitive, although it is not so clear just what they were campaigning against.

The Nashville Banner believed that the poems were the product of intellectual detachment and that they seemed deeply branded with the impress of men who had lived their lives and experienced their emotional crises in pretty strict accord with colleges and universities and their dicta.[2]

The poem Ego[3] by John Crowe Ransom gives us an idea of the seriousness and introspection of at least one of the Fugitives. In the last stanza of this poem we see glimpses of the poet's loneliness and withdrawal from an unsatisfactory world.

> And if an alien, miserably at feud
> With those my generation, I have reason
> To think to salve the fester of my treason:
> A seven[4] of friends exceeds much multitude.

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[1] Vol. I, No. 1.

[2] July 7, 1922.

[3] Vol. I, No. 1. See supplement of this study.

[4] The seven original members of the group.

The second number came out as a midsummer issue having increased to sixty-four pages and containing twenty-five poems. The pen-names of the authors were still used because "the writers wished the local public to judge their literary issue irrespective of personalities".[1]

A gallant little caravan it was setting youthfully forth into the dreadful "Sahara of the Bozart", and finding there more than one oasis undreamed of by the delectable scoffer who had challenged the journey.[2]

The New York Times said that the Fugitive was representative of the renascence of letters that the South was undergoing and was willingly added to the steadily growing and admirable quality of Southern magazines, including the Nomad of Birmingham, the Double Dealer of New Orleans, and the Reviewer of Richmond.[3]

In this second number the authors thank their friends for the interest shown in the magazine, which had exhausted the editions, put the periodical on a firm financial footing, and led the Editors to speculate hopefully on a policy of perpetuity. For success in increasing the list of subscriptions, Tate was personally responsible.[4]

To an unbiased observer it was easily apparent that the poems in this second issue[5] of the Fugitive were a marked improvement over the first. The chief element of improvement seems to be a greater intelligibility, the first poems having been somewhat vague and difficult for the ordinary

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[1] Editorial, Vol. I, No. 2, June 1922.

[2] H. L. Mencken, Nashville Tennessean, January 29, 1923.

[3] New York Times, January 1923.

[4] Information received from Mr. Tate.

[5] October 1922.

mortal to understand.[1]

Under the title Caveat Emptor[2] the Editors of the Fugitive tell us that the Fugitives are amateurs of poetry, who hold long and frequent meetings devoted both to practice and criticism. We are told that the group mind is evidently neither radical nor reactionary, but catholic and perhaps excessively earnest in literary dogma.

The following key serves to decode the aliases which previously appeared:[3]

KEY

Marpha--Walter Clyde Curry
Robin Gallivant--Donald Davidson
Philora--James M. Frank
L. Oafer--Sidney Mttron-Hirsch
Jonathan David--Stanley Johnson
Dendric--Merrill Moore
Roger Prim--John Crowe Ransom
Drimlonigher, and
King Badger--Alec Brock Stevenson
Henry Feathertop--Allen Tate

No one knows except the Fugitives themselves exactly why these romantic and imaginary pen-names were chosen. We know that they did not wish to use their own names at first because they wanted to see what sort of public reaction would occur. They thought that if people in Nashville, and if their friends who bought and read the book, knew the names of those who were writing the poems, they would not criticize or appreciate the work on its own merit but in the light of the personality of the author. Accordingly they decided to have literary names and this added to the fun and excitement and the "secret" of the initial reactions.

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[1]Nashville Tennessean, August 15, 1922.
[2]Vol. I, 34.
[3]Vol. I, No. 6, 66.

So far as is known everybody picked his own name.

Interesting suppositions might be made as to the individual choice of pen names. Henry Feathertop was taken by Allen Tate for reasons best known to himself. It is a fact that Mr. Tate has a very large head and prominent forehead and this may have given him the idea for his pen name. It might also mean that his head was "light" or that he sometimes felt gay and light-headed. Again it might have meant that the weight of his intellect and brain rested rightly on his psychological and emotional personality--or that he had a gay feather in his hat. Again it might have meant that he took the weightier problems of life in a light-hearted and undisturbed manner.

Why Alec Stevenson chose Drimlonigher and King Badger is also a matter of supposition. There is a rumor that Mr. Stevenson had a sort of Celtic personality and those names might have meant something to him. They might even have been family names. This possibility is also an unsubstantiated rumor. "Badger" means to hector, pester, or harry, and whether Mr. Stevenson had this in mind when he chose this name only he knowns. A "badger" is, a gray-coated, strong-jawed nocturnal hibernated plantigrade quadruped between the weasel and the bear, we are told in the Oxford Dictionary.

Roger Prim was chosen by John Crowe Ransom either alone or with the help of some of his friends who may have suggested it. Since Mr. Ransom is very prim and precise, and especially restrained in his statements, the name certainly seems to fit him.

We can make only the merest supposition about the name Jonathan David. The fact that the poet's last name was Johnson may account for

the Jonathan; also Jonathan and David were brothers, and Mr. Johnson may have felt that the name would represent himself plus his subconscious. Again, Jonathan and David were the names of two friends and it may have been that Mr. Johnson thought that he was his own best friend, and therefore chose a combination of these names as his pseudonym.

Sidney Hirsch might have taken the name L. Oafer for various reasons. Since he did not have a regular or formal ~~business~~ occupation, he might have jokingly referred to himself as "loafer". Also "oafer" means an egg man; "oeuf" in French means egg. It might also have been a symbolic term in which the egg is named as the source of all life. Then again the egg and dart design in architecture might have had something to do with Mr. Hirsch's choosing of this peculiar name.

Only Doctor Curry himself could tell why he chose Marpha, a name with a feminine ending. In one of Kipling's poems Marpha was a drudge who sacrificed glory of personal distinction and who worked hard and long for the sheer joy of offering herself as a sort of sacrifice. Robin Gallivant is a very romantic name. Some of Mr. Davidson's poems show us that he did write romantic poetry. Whether or not there is any significance in the term "Gallivant" which might mean a person who wandered about from place to place or one who wrote in a wandering romantic manner is a matter for conjecture.

Philora, Mr. Frank's pseudonym, is one of the most interesting of all the pen names chosen because there are so many possible meanings for it. The stem "phil" might have come from the Greek "philos", which means "friend", or from the Greek and modern formations "fond of books", or from "philology" which means love of learning, or it might have some-

thing to do with "philomel" in reference to the myth of Philomel who was transformed into a nightingale. It might also have come from the noun "philosopher", a lover of wisdom or one who regulates his life by the light of philosophy.

Dendric,[1] the name chosen by Doctor Merrill Moore is particularly significant in the light of his present occupation as a psychiatrist. In 1922 when Doctor Moore became a member of the Fugitive group he had been studying biology and particularly the structure of cells. He knew that cells, particularly nerve cells had things on them that were called dendrons or dendrites, meaning tree-like formations. He thought of himself as "branched-out" in several ways, and because of his interest in biology or botany or science or neurology, he chose to identify himself with a tree in his unconscious. The "day stimulus" or the thing that precipitated the idea for his name was the structure of a dendrite.

At the appearance of the first Fugitive which contained the pen names of the poets there was a great deal of guessing and a great deal of wrong guessing, but it proved to be an advantage to the Group. It was a way of advertising and elicited a great deal of local curiosity about the magazine. After the names were discarded a great many people were very much surprised to find who had written what and many in fact did not believe it.

The Fugitive had the simplest working system that was known among periodicals. It put into a single record the latest verses of a number

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[1] See "Dendric To His Fetish" in the Supplement of this study.

of men who assembled to "swap" poetic wares and to elaborate the ars poetica. These poets acknowledged no trammels upon the independence of their thought. That they were in tune with the times is seen in a large degree in their poems, where they show themselves to be self-converted experimentalists. They differ so widely and so cordially from each other on matters poetical that they were about equally startled and chagrined when two notable critics, on the evidence of two early numbers, construed them as a single person camouflaging under many pseudonyms.

The procedure of publication was simply to gather up the poems that ranked the highest, by general consent of the group, and take them down to the publisher.

It was at the end of this third issue that the now more hopeful authors prognosticated that the magazine would run through another year at any rate.

Thanks were extended to the many young poets from all over the country who, upon the first appearance of the Fugitive, sent in contributions of poetry. The number and merit of these offerings were striking. It was touching to think that they came in desperation to an unpromising newcomer like the Fugitive. The Fugitives were seized with a sad comment upon the disesteem in which the noblest of the muses walked in the market place in those days. Some of the poems sent in were entirely suitable for publication, but according to the terms of the foundation of the Fugitive hospitality was well-night sealed against them in advance. Wisely or unwisely they gave most of the limited space to their own poetry.

Plans were made for an occasional visitors' number in which verses

would appear from other poets. Such a number was planned for December.[1]

Moved by the brotherly spirit, the Fugitives published, in the December issue, poems of writers outside their own group. Some of the "visitors" were Witter Bynner, David Morton, William A. Percy, Robert Graves, Louis Untermeyer, John Gould Fletcher, and L. A. G. Strong.

At this time, the Fugitive began to expand. Philosophic and literary essays and book reviews, which signified more profound discussion of the nature of poetry among the group, were published in succeeding issues. These are of special importance as they help us to realize the literary and moral convictions of the Fugitives. They are discussed subsequently in the section on morals.

The circulation of the magazine gradually increased and its poetry was read extensively. The subscription list ranged from 200 to 500,[2] and subscriptions extended to thirty-two states of the Union besides three foreign countries--Great Britain, Germany, and Canada.[3] The American states into which the Fugitive regularly went were: Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, Kentucky, Wyoming, South Carolina, Washington, Michigan, Utah, Maine, Colorado, Massachusetts, California, Maryland, Nebraska, Connecticut, North Carolina, Arkansas, Virginia, Mississippi, Georgia, Delaware, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Texas, Oklahoma, Alabama, Illinois, and Tennessee. Well-known publications, such as the London Poetry Review, the London Mercury, Current Opinion, the Literary Digest, New York Times,

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[1] Vol. I, No. 3 (October 1922), and information received from Dr. Moore.

[2] Information from Merrill Moore.

[3] Nashville Tennessean, May 27, 1923.

the Bookman, the Boston Monitor, gave it commentary space and favorable criticism.

From time to time additions were made to the group. Eight new members were elected to the original group of nine, making the total number of Fugitives sixteen. The new members were:

Merrill Moore 1922
William Yandell Eliot 1922
Jesse Ely Wills 1922
William Frierson 1922
Ridley Wills 1922
Robert Penn Warren. 1924
Laura Riding Gottschalk . . . 1925
Alfred Starr. 1925

At first the Fugitive was published with an Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editors, or Business Manager. They stated that they had "no differentiation of ranks or titles, and even clung to an old-fashioned round-about method of group action in doing the chores of publication, with the very idea of securing the blessings of individual liberty against the possible suspicion of tyranny".[1]

Group meetings were still held and carbon copies of poems exchanged. The poems were read and freely criticized. Those which survived these communal strictures were gathered together and taken to the publisher.

Such a system soon proved unsatisfactory, and the August number of 1923 announced that an Editor, Donald Davidson, and an Associate Editor, Allen Tate, had been elected for a period in order to expedite editorial business. The Group was still to continue its sovereignty. In October of that year Mr. Jacques Black was elected Business Manager, and the magazine began to assume definite shape. This policy of electing Editor

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[1]Editorial, Vol. II, No. 6 (April 1923).

and Associate Editor was continued until the cessation of the Fugitive. In 1925 John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren assumed these duties.[1]

The Fugitive existed from April 1922 until December 1925. From its first timid venture as a magazine in which a small group of young men sought to embody their own conceptions of the relations of poetry and life, it grew to be a periodical recognized as possessing an intense individuality, and a magazine from which it soon became natural to expect a certain type of poetry.

From the standpoint of circulation, contents, management, and financial standing, the Fugitive was at its best in 1925. Eventual separation of the group, however, had already commenced. Elliott was in California, and Tate had accepted a position in New York. Both wished to maintain a passive status as far as the magazine was concerned. Other members were making plans to depart. The duties of an Editor are strenuous. Messrs. Ransom, Curry, and Davidson were professors at Vanderbilt University, and as Editors of the Fugitive found it difficult to perform efficiently all the duties required of both positions. Since their time was so much limited, they would either have to give up writing poetry, give up earning their living, or give up the publication of the Fugitive. The wisdom of suspending the publishing of the magazine was discussed and finally agreed upon. The impossibility of indefinite continuance was recognized; the magazine had served its purpose for the poets. In December 1925 the following announcement appeared:

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[1] Information obtained from Merrill Moore and Allen Tate.

ANNOUNCEMENT[1]

With this issue the Fugitive suspends regular publication for an indefinite period.

This action is taken because there is no available Editor to take over the administrative duties incidental to the publication of a periodical of even such limited scope as the Fugitive. The Fugitives are busy people, for the most part ensalved to Mammon, their time used up in vulgar bread-and-butter occupations. Not one of them is in a position to offer himself on the altar of sacrifice. We are like the Richmond Reviewer, which had to announce that unless a proper Editor was quickly forthcoming a discontinuance was necessary.

It is gratifying to be able to state that no financial exigency was the joint in our armor, the vulnerable heel in our anatomy. The Fugitive from the beginning has solved its financial problem without undue effort. For a time we were financed purely on a subscription basis; then the business problem was taken wholly off our shoulders by Mr. Jacques Black, a public-spirited promoter who assumed financial responsibility and conducted the entire business management; and for a year since that period we have met our budget through a combination of subscriptions and patronage. The list of our Patrons is carried in this number as in others; they have believed in the periodical to the extent of contributing a considerable sum to its support.[2] Among these is Mr. Simon Ghertner, a printer who has manifested a philanthropic rather than a mercenary spirit in his relation of publisher of the periodical. According to our experience, it is easy for a deserving poetry magazine to finance itself.

It is still more gratifying to believe that from the literary standpoint there is no stoppage in the quantity or the quality of Fugitive output; that we are no more bankrupt in creative energy than in money. For four years we have issued four to six numbers of the periodical annually, and we have been informed that the numbers of the present year were not below our highest standard. For that matter,

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[1] The Fugitive, December 1925.

[2] H. S. Coil; Esther Anthell, Ithaca, N.Y.; Jacques Black; Associated Retailers of Nashville, Joel Cheek, Nashville; William C. Cobb,

the Fugitives will continue to hold their frequent meetings for the reading and discussion of poetry and philosophy; we were holding these meetings for years before the thought of publication was entertained, and we shall go on holding them after publication, for the time being, has stopped.

Undoubtedly the publication of the Fugitive will be resumed if, and as soon as, our present problem is solved. Our plans are too indefinite to announce now; but we hope that, even pending a possible resumption of regular publication, not a year may pass without some kind of published exhibit to break the silence.

It has been a pleasant venture. No Fugitive dreamed in the beginning that our magazine would meet with the success that it has. We have completed four years of honorable existence in the midst of the keenest competition for the ear of the lovers of poetry; we have supplied ourselves with rich experience, we have made many loyal friends, and we have, unless all signs fail, won a certain respect from the bigwigs which an unpretentious and provincial magazine had no reason to expect.

The men in Nashville still meet to talk things over, and they still write; they correspond with "the absent members", men who have gone away.[1]

(continued) Nashville; Mrs. Isabel R. Mayers, Los Angeles; Mrs. W. R. Davidson, Evansville, Indiana; Simon Ghertner; Mrs. Kenneth McColl, Bennettsville, Georgia; Professor C. A. McMurray, Nashville; Mrs. F. A. Sherrer, Oberlin, Ohio; F. A. Sherrer, Oberlin, Ohio; Mrs. Eveyln Stevenson, Nashville; Ward-Belmont College, Nashville; and several anonymous donors and patrons.

[1] P. v, Fugitive Anthology.

POETRY CONTESTS

POETRY CONTESTS

A Poetry Contest was announced in issue Number 6 of the Fugitive with the expressed aim of stimulating the younger poets. The Associated Retailers of Nashville gave the Nashville poetry prize of one hundred dollars. The Ward-Belmont College of Nashville offered the Ward-Belmont prize of fifty dollars. The terms of the contest involved three preliminaries and a final, and restricted the participants to poets who had not published a volume of poetry, and to women undergraduates. The judges in this contest were: Miss Jessie B. Rittenhouse, Mr. Gorham B. Munson, and Mr. William Alexander Percy.

Miss Rittenhouse and Mr. Percy felt that the poems contributed to the contenst were excellent, but contrary opinion was expressed by Mr. Munson, who thought that the Ward-Belmont prize should have been withheld for "lack of an entry competent enough to deserve it". He declared that he found in none of the poems submitted any musical interest or any metaphorical ingenuity or any sense of an intelligence, however immature.[1]

Upon a tie-decision of the judges, the Nashville prize was divided equally between A Song of Death, by Rose Henderson of New York, and Berceuse For Birds, by Joseph Auslander of Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Ward-Belmont prize was awarded to A Chart Showing Rain, Winds, and Isotherma Lines and Ocean Currents, by Louise Patterson Guyol of Smith Col-

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[1] Vol. II, No. 10, 163.

lege.

The prize-winning poems are exhibited in the supplement of this study. "The first object of the contest was to discover good poetry."[1]

In 1924 the poetry contest was repeated. This time the Fugitive group were the sole judges, and, with the exception of making ineligible members of the group, the other restrictions were removed. To the Nashville prize and the Ward-Belmont prize was added the Presbyterian Book Store prize of twenty-five dollars.

The Nashville prize of one hundred dollars was awarded to Laura Riding Gottschalk of Louisville, Kentucky. In the minds of the members of the group who were the judges of the award, the poetry of Mrs. Gottschalk stood out as the discovery of the year, and they deemed it a privilege to be first in calling attention to the work of a young writer who was then coming forth as a new figure in American poetry. "With a diverse play of imagination she combines in her poetry a sound intelligibility and a keen irony which gives her work a substance not often found in current American poetry. Her poetry is philosophical in trend, yet not divorced from life, but generally tense with emotion and concerned with profound issues. Furthermore, she has developed her own idiom of expression,--an idiom which manifests itself in a variety of forms, conventional or unconventional, and which gives her poetry the stamp of an original personality."[2]

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[1] Vol. II, No. 9.

[2] Vol. III, Nos. 5-6.

The Ward-Belmont prize of fifty dollars was awarded to Olive Tilford Dargan, of Almond, North Carolina, in particular recognition of her poem, "Far Bugles", which was published in the August Fugitive, and in general recognition of the distinguished contributions she had made to poetry through her interpretations of the legends and life of the Carolina mountains.

The Presbyterian Book Store Prize of twenty-five dollars was awarded to Louis Gilmore of New Orleans, associate editor of the Double Dealer, who, in his tense poetic epigrams and word sketches, contributed to the Fugitive, demonstrated the possibility of economy in his poetic diction. Experimental in form, his work commands attention because of its vivacity and force.

Apparently the Fugitives believed with Harriet Monroe that "only when the creative impulse meets an equally strong impulse of sympathy is the highest achievement possible in any development of human effort".[1] Their interest in young unknown poets has been shown by the efforts they made to establish the poetry contests conducted in the Fugitive, and by the advice and encouragement they gave to Vanderbilt students and others who were interested in poetry writing.[2]

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[1] Harriet Monroe, A Poet's Life, 327.

[2] Beyond Dark Hills

BOOK REVIEWS FROM THE FUGITIVE

BOOK REVIEWS FROM THE FUGITIVE

The Fugitives have been analyzed, criticized, and catalogued by their readers, critics, and by each other. In the book reviews which appeared in the various issues of the magazine we have a rare opportunity of discovering what the Fugitives thought of some of their contemporaries.

On English Poetry[1] was the first review to appear, and while John Crowe Ransom showed an understanding and sympathy for Robert Graves, the fact was stressed that his work was the "book of an Englishman and (in the best sense) a conventionalist". The poetic problem as it presents itself almost peculiarly to Americans was scarcely touched upon. Mr. Ransom insists that "in America the inroads of sophistication are early, and that it is American ogspel to indulge it; the result being that poets throw off the confinements of meter before they have established conclusively that these are or are not habitable".[2]

The Wills brothers were the next poets of the group to attack or defend modern poetry as found in fellow writers.[3] Mr. Ridley Wills believes that Auslander[4] is an accomplished technician in the older forms of verse and a contriver of polished and intriguing phrase, a poet of much promise but not of great immediate significance. He finds his verse

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[1] John Crowe Ransom, "On English Poetry", Fugitive, Vol. I, No. 3.
[2] Ibid. [3] Vol. IV, No. 1 (March 1925).
[4] Sunrise Trumpets, Harper & Bros., New York, 1924.

often cloying and lacking in "cerebration". Although he is a contriver of fine phrases, he shows a marked tendency to overwork such effective phrases either in a refrain or by scattered repetition. Although Mr. Wills wrote his review in March 1925, today, thirteen years later, Mr. Auslander has failed to show evidence of Mr. Will's prophecy,--i.e. that he is a poet of much promise.

Mr. Jesse Wills finds Roy Campbell's The Flaming Terrapin[1] "direct, vigorous, savage and beautiful," and finds a poem in six parts of nearly two thousand lines written in pentameter couplets rather unusual. If the break-neck speed at which the poem moves throughout had been lessened, the poem might have had added variety. As to the rhythm of the poem, Mr. Wills felt that imagery dominated rather than music, although in some the two combine magnificently as when--

> Ocean lifts on a white crest
> His pale foam feathers for the moon to burn.

It fell to the lot of Donald Davidson to criticize the collection of three critical essays[2] by T. S. Eliot dealing with Dryden, the metaphysical poets, and Andrew Marvell. "A book of great significance", says Mr. Davidson, "and one which every modern poet and every student of modern poetry would do well to absorb thoroughly. It contains a new and discriminating evaluation of certain too-much-neglected poets and it offers a key to important directions and values in modern poetry."

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[1] Roy Campbell, The Flaming Terrapin, The Dial Press, June 1925.

[2] Homage to John Dryden, London, The Hogarth Press, 1924. Mr. Davidson's review is to be found in the Fugitive, Vol. IV, No. 6 (June 1925).

Mr. Davidson says that T. S. Eliot has come very near to justifying the modern dislike for the nineteenth century poets and to defending on valid grounds the complexity, or obscurity or difficulty of much modern poetry. According to Mr. Eliot poets in our civilization as it exists at present must be difficult. He says our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity playing upon a refined sensibility and must, therefore, produce various and complex results. It is more difficult to be simple than it is to be difficult in poetry today, since most kinds of simplicity are likely to fall under the accusation of dishonesty on the one hand and lack of necessary diversity of equipment on the other.[1]

The reviewing[2] of the Pot of Earth[3] by Donald Davidson shows us that the Fugitives were alert to the significance of Mr. MacLeish as a poet. Although T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land seems to have been the inspiration for the Pot of Earth, Mr. Davidson believes that the poem is so astonishingly well finished and astonishingly well sustained that it is very superior to any of the long poems of recent contemporaries. Attention was called to the notable feature--the indirectness of the poem,--to the precision of diction, and to the maturity of viewpoint.

John Crowe Ransom disapproves[4] of Gorham Munson's analysis of Mr. Robert Frost. Mr. Munson does not admit, as Mr. Ransom seems to think he should, that Mr. Frost is immensely metaphysical. We are also told

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[1] Cf. footnote 2, preceding page.

[2] Vol. IV, No. 2 (June 1925).

[3] Archibald MacLeish, Pot of Earth, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., June 1925.

[4] "Thoughts on Poetic Discontent", Vol. IV, No. 2 (June 1925).

that there is a great deal of irony in the poetry of Robert Frost and that his irony may be regarded as "the ultimate mode of the great minds, since it implies first of all an honorable and strenuous period or romantic creation. Irony is the rarest of the states of the mind, because it is the most inclusive; the whole mind has been active in arriving its both creation and criticism upon poetry and science." Of all the Fugitive poets, Mr. Ransom, it seems to me, is the most capable and the best equipped to discuss the question of the use of irony in poetry, since this is one of the most outstanding characteristics of his own poems.

The second book of Robert Graves entitled Poetic Unreason[1] is reviewed in Volume IV.[2] Mr. Ransom says that a poem records, for all its shining look of innocence, intricate historical expression, but it can only hope to be intelligible to those minds whose history is tangled in just the same way as the poet's. "Good poetry is that which fits the reader's own passionate history and expresses that which needs expression from our private depths. Bad poetry is poetry which we do not like because it does not illuminate our private darkness, and which, therefore, we call unintelligible, or vain or trifling. Poetry is saved from being utterly licentious and chaotic by having a form and content based closely (as a general thing) upon the Tradition."[3]

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[1] Cecil Palmer, Publisher, London, England, 1925.

[2] John Crowe Ransom, "Doctrine of Relativity", Vol. IV, Sept. 1925.

[3] Ibid.

In his review[1] of two books[2] of poetry, Donald Davidson discusses the dilemma of modern poetry. The problem of whether a poet should be new and run the risk of being tedious in affectation or whether to revivify the old by discovering that the task requires a philosopher as well as a poet. Cummings' answer to this problem is experimentation in which he sacrifices old forms to meet the new order of things. Hervey Allen chose the way of the Traditionalist; he takes old forms and renders them vital by purging out the obvious clichés and by adding a color and sonority that are convincingly modern though not experimental. Today we think of Hervey Allen as the author of Anthony Adverse rather than as a poet. His ability to write descriptive and brilliant passages is shown in this long and picturesque novel.

Donald Davidson's review of R. C. Trevelyan's book Thamyris has been discussed previously in this study.

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[1] "Two Ways of Poetry", Vol. IV, No. 4.

[2] E. E. Cummings, 16 poems, New York: The Dial Press, September 1925. Hervey Allen, Earth Moods, New York: Harper & Bros., September 1925.

PART II
PURPOSES AND IDEALS

PART II

PURPOSES AND IDEALS

Any thorough study of the Fugitives should present a clear conception of their philosophic, artistic, political, and moral perceptions. There is no difficulty in noting from the poems and editorials which appear in the Fugitive that they are a group who often disagree among themselves on the principles which they persistently allow. They did not have a "cause" so far as they could see; all they had in common was a certain belief in their poetry and a desire to write more of it.[1] The Fugitives declared that they were "a band of anointed spirits associated together on principles not of race, color, conditions of servitude, nor academic entitlements. They assert that it was constitutional in their plan that they were all equals."[2]

These poets admitted to being experimentalists whose purposes were individual creation so far as it is possible to any individual or group. They held no dogmas concerning the technique and mechanics of poetic creation. It was their belief that the aesthetic problem confronting the poet was eminently practical--versification, diction, composition. In a word, mechanics being the elusive enemy to capture and subdue. It

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[1] Information received from Dr. Moore.

[2] Vol. II, No. 6.

was pretty well decided that the poet's finished product must represent some phase of life as ordinarily perceived, and that he must look for his effects in new combinations of imagination representing only the constituted material world.[1]

The problem of representation should be of concern to the poet, for the solution of it will largely determine his diction, and, especially, his prosody. "The unique virtue of the contemporary revolt was its break, in a positive direction, with the tyranny of representation."[2]

The Fugitive denied the designation of a school bestowed on them by modern critics and refused to bind themselves to any formulae. Rules and regulations, they declared, had again and again been set and again been broken. Poetry comes from the individual writing it and will have as many variations as the individual writing it.[3]

The poets rebelled against the tyranny of tradition--especially Southern tradition--and fled from nothing faster, they said, than the high-caste Brahmins of the Old South. "The atavism and sentimentality of this Southern tradition made it inaccessible to present Southern poets; and if a considerable bulk of our poetry should ever be discovered to sound a new note, while it would be within the province of criticism to account it less 'Southern,' it would not be within the province of criticism to account it any the less southern."[4] The ques-

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[1] Vol. I, No. 4.

[2] Allen Tate, "Whose Ox?", Vol. I, p. 99.

[3] "Certain Fallacies in Modern Poetry", Vol. III, No. 3, p. 68.

[4] "The Other Half of Verse", Vol. II, p. 99.

tions whether the limitations were in the poets or whether there was something fatally oppressive about these materials, readily obtainable from the past, remained unannounced. But there was a fear of "stressing too much a tradition only when looked at through a haze of generous imagination".[1]

This revolt from tradition was accompanied by a second ideal concerning the function and genuine nature of poetry. The Fugitives acknowledged "no trammels upon the independence of their thought",[2] and declared their right of independent creation. A development of this theory finally led them to the principle of intense individuality, which culminated in the statement that a given plan of sophistication was a characteristic beauty of poetry[3] and the poet "was justified in remaking and remoulding, in a subjective order, the material world".[3] This principle was justified upon the belief that "perhaps the world, as it is, doesn't afford accurate correlatives of all emotional complexities".[4]

In spite of the Fugitives' conviction of the virtue of the contemporary poetic revolt, they did detect certain fallacies even in the theory of modern poetry. The five fallacies in modern poetry bemoaned by Donald Davidson in the name of the Fugitives are:

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[1] "The Other Half of Verse", Vol. II, p. 99.

[2] Editorial, Vol. I, p. 66.

[3] Vol. I, No. 4, p. 99.

[4] Vol. I, No. 4.

1. That a good poet must be possessed of an aesthetic.

2. That a good poet must perforce use "local color".

3. That vocabulary is in itself important.

4. That the grand style is impossible to modern poetry.

5. That no very specific limitations can be set for poetry.

A detailed discussion of these fallacies will be found in the Editorial of Donald Davidson, entitled "Fallacies in Modern Poetry".[1]

John Crowe Ransom in speaking of the modernism in American poetry claims that "the intelligent poet of today is very painfully perched in a position which he cannot indefinitely occupy; vulgarly, he is straddling the fence, and cannot with safety land on either side. He can at will perfect a poetry in either of two directions. He can develop sense and style, in the manner of distinguished modern prose, in which event he may be sure that the result will not fall into any objective form. Or he can work it out as a metrical and formal exercise, but he will be disappointed in its content."[2]

In a reply to Mr. Ransom's above editorial, Allen Tate says:[3] "I do not think with Mr. Ransom that the reason free verse has so quickly lost its prestige is due to a tardy but irresistible suspicion that after all poetry is committed on principle to a performance involving a dual role for words. Mr. Ransom and Mr. Wordsworth do not see an allowable difference in diction between poetry and prose; so in routing free verse the former has only to find it wanting the indispensable

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[1] Vol. III, No. 3, p. 66.

[2] "Future of Poetry", Vol. III, No. 1.

[3] "One Escape from The Dilemma", Vol. III, No. 2.

metrical scheme. However, I assent entirely to his conclusion that free verse has failed."

We hear again from Mr. Ransom[1] in his discussion of "juvenile" poetry of today. He says many poets and whole multitudes of readers believe poetry is an exercise in the juvenile modes of mind. Plato, a rich and adult mind if ever there was one, decided in his republic to establish a censorship of music, and accordingly he prohibited all but the pure and simple modes. His example is still being followed by the Doctors of the Ars Poetica. If poetry is worth the candle, poets must report their own mixed modes; but to simplify and prettify the theme is the office of the composers of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Readers.

There are two important problems[2] which face the poet of today if he is to be the traditional poet we have a right to expect, in this age, if not forms remodeled to suit a changing world, at least a body of thought, rich, mature, original, as Hardy, Yeats, and the great English traditionalists gave it to us. This taks requires the poet to be a philosopher as well as an artist. On the other hand, if the poet wishes to be new, he encounters a risk of being tedious in affectation.

Mr. Davidson "wonders if the history of poetry has been merely a deplorable tale of decadence, a progressive impoverishment and deterioration, through senility and second-childishness, towards an unlamented

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[1] "Mixed Modes", Vol. IV, No. 1.

[2] "Two Ways of Poetry", Donald Davidson, Vol. IV, No. 4.

death in a bastard and graceless prose, or on the contrary has the gradual divorce of poetry from music and intoning meant its liberation for subtler and more rational, but no less truly poetic purposes. Each art has gradually specialised, but also gradually enlarged, its field of activity. Within each art definite variety of form is the rule, and the history of art is a story of the multiplication of species, with always plenty of bastard offspring and rebellious shoots to bewilder the contemporary critic. The poet makes greater demands on his audience than ever before in the history of poetry; but the audience most surprisingly and readily adapts itself to his demands. Good poetry is fairly and quickly recognized, publication is easy; and it would be possible to argue that there are more good poets in proportion to population in England and America than ever before in the history of those nations,--and by 'good poets' I mean those who whatever their shortcomings in inspiration and range, can employ intelligently and effectively the accumulated resources of the art. In short, though American and English soldiers in France had no native epic to chant as they went into battle, no songs of Rolands and Beowulfs, it would be hard to say that the state of poetry on that account is one of degradation and decay."[1]

Edmund Wilson supposes that "John Crowe Ransom was the leader of the Fugitives; And there is perhaps not one who does not appear to derive from him in some way. What they all have in common with Mr. Ransom is

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[1] "The Future of Poetry", Vol. IV, No. 4.

an accent of irony, a 'metaphysical' turn and a rich English vocabulary. The strength of their position as a group has enabled them to develop an original vein of imagery and even a rhythm of their own. Their organism has, for example, been vigorous enough to throw off the influence of T. S. Eliot, to which so many isolated poets have succumbed, but of which we can only detect occasional traces in the work of the Fugitives. They are one of the many recent manifestations of the new awakening of creative activity in the South."[1]

A cursory survey of the Fugitive's poems shows us that the interests of these poets were varied in form, scope, subject matter, spirit, and tone. With a great variety of subject matter and many different forms, the Fugitives show themselves to be not only experimentalists and Moderns but adherents to some of the tendencies of the Traditional poets. Traces of Shakespeare, Shelley, and Donne as well as T. S. Eliot, Edgar Lee Masters, and Ezra Pound may be found in the Fugitive's poems. Besides this there is strong individualism and intense originality.[2]

In spite of the fact that these particularly intelligent young writers had no "cause" it is the author's belief that they express in an especially brilliant manner a true picture of the flux and uncertainty of American ideology and the bewilderment and strivings of our contemporary poets who are trying to show honestly a subject that refuses to stand still long enough to permit the making of a "time-exposure"

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[1] Edmund Wilson, "The Tennessee Poets", New Republic, March 7, 1928.
[2] See Supplement of this study.

necessary for a pure and artistic picture. The picture they create of the poetic chaos of the 1920's to the 1930's is blurred and nazy but with all truly representative of our poetic American today.

An interesting presentation of the Fugitive's literary perceptions is made by Cleanth Brooks Jr.[1] He says: "The ability to find in the tradition elements previously overlooked, to see tradition in new terms, is one of the best credentials which the Fugitives have to certify their own status as traditional poets. This constant attempt to include the discordant and contradictory without evansions and suppressions determines the basis structure of the Fugitives' poetry.

"The characteristic structure of their poetry is to be found even in a single line. For example, one of their most frequently used devices is that of enforcing the local and colloquial expression against the literary and traditional thus admitting a relationship not merely of parallelism but of contrast. Consider from Warren,

> One fellow came out of his mortal miseries
> and
> Through this gray guy be no Aurelius

or from Tate,

> So: Man, dull critter of enormous head
> What would he look at in the coiling sky?

And Ransom's very characteristic personal idiom employs sharp and even shocking associations of the colloquial and pedantic:

> Fearing their lords precarious set-to

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[1] "The Modern Southern Poet", Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. II (April 1935), p. 304.

or

> So the insufferable pow-pow
> In his son's houses did him most unfilial wrong.

Tate's poetry is a continual test of the imagination.

"This continual juxtaposition of incongruous elements is also found in Warren. An example of this is seen in such passages as:

> What shall I find beyond the snoring pine?
> O Eyes locked in death's immaculate design
> Shall fix their last distrust in mine

Following this Warren says:

> Give me the nickels off your eyes
> From your hands the violets
> Let me bless your obsequies
> If you possessed conveniently enough three eyes
> I could buy a pack of cigarettes.

"The shock of these irrelevant associations is apparent.

"Much of the quality of the Fugitives's poetry must be credited to them as individuals. It is not merely an ex halation of the Southern soil. Other poets born in the Confederate states have lacked the quality and it is possible to attain it in other parts of the world.

"When a group of southern gentlemen gather together for the purpose of writing and criticizing their poetry, it is reasonable to assume that the result will be a collection of Southern poetry. This is not true of the Fugitives. Few of their poems were written about the South as a particular region. That which is Southern in their poetry would be just as effective in poetry about any other section of the country. The Southern scene never became the 'raison d'etre' of their poetry. In lines that are Southern the figures of speech used are serving in the poem, but are not served by them. The distinction is most important.

"It is significant, however, that the Fugitives have been the group in the South most concerned with redefining and confirming the Southern heritage, and that T. S. Eliot should have had to make the most violent possible effort at adjustment with the tradition, that of direct repatriation to England."[1]

While most of the members of the Fugitive group are in sympathy with the Agrarian movements, four of the poets have been especially eager and willing to serve its cause. John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren have written and still write prolifically, vigorously, and intelligently on this subject.[2]

"Mr. Ransom's recommendation of an Agrarian economy[3] depends on the foregoing principles. The objective is not the abolition, but the correction of industrialism, just as the objective on the theoretical side of Ransom's article is not the abolition, but the correction of science; that is, the interpretation of science in the total context of human experience.

"Ransom has merely been conceived to defend man against a revolu-

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[1] "The Modern Southern Poet", loc. cit., 304.

[2] Tate and Agar, Who Owns America, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1936. Cf. also "A Mirror for Artists", I'll Take My Stand, New York and London: Harper Bros., 1930; "Reconstructed But Unregenerate", I'll Take My Stand; Robert Penn Warren, "The Briar Patch", I'll Take My Stand; Donald Davidson, Attack On Leviathan, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938.

[3] Robert Penn Warren, "John Crowe Ransom: A Study in Irony", Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 93.

tion which by a dogma of unadulterated reason, has endangered his snesibility; which has, in fact, promoted its dissociation."

Robert Penn Warren gives us an idea of what at least one member of the group thinks about the great Southern problem of the negro and his adjustment to industrialism in the South:[1] "In the past the Southern negro has always been a creature of the small town and farm. That is where he still chiefly belongs, by temperament and capacity; there he has less the character of a 'problem' and more the status of a human being who is likely to find in agricultural and domestic pursuits the happiness that his good nature and easy ways incline him to an ordinary function of his being. Once he worked the land as a slave; now he operates on his own account a considerable part of it. If the Southern white man feels that the agrarian life has a certain irreplaceable value in his society, and if he hopes to maintain its integrity in the face of industrialism or its dignity in the face of agricultural depression, he must find a place for the negro in his scheme."

Messrs. Tate, Ransom, Davidson, and Warren have continued to express their ideas about the South, regionalism, the negro problem, and literature in such magazines as The Sewanee Review, The Bookman, The Criterion, The Calendar of Modern Letters, The Virginia Quarterly Review, and The Hound and Horn. Their articles have also appeared in such symposia as I'll Take My Stand,[2] Culture in the South,[3] and Attack on the Leviathan.[4]

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[1] I'll Take My Stand, pp. 260, 261-263.

[2] By Twelve Southerns, New York: Harper Bros., 1930.

[3] Edited by W. T. Crouch, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, .

[4] Ed. Donald Davidson, 1930.

PART III

BIOGRAPHIES

Allen Tate

Ridley Wills

Jesse C. Wills

Sidney Mttron Hirsch.

Stanley Johnson

John Crowe Ransom

James McFrank

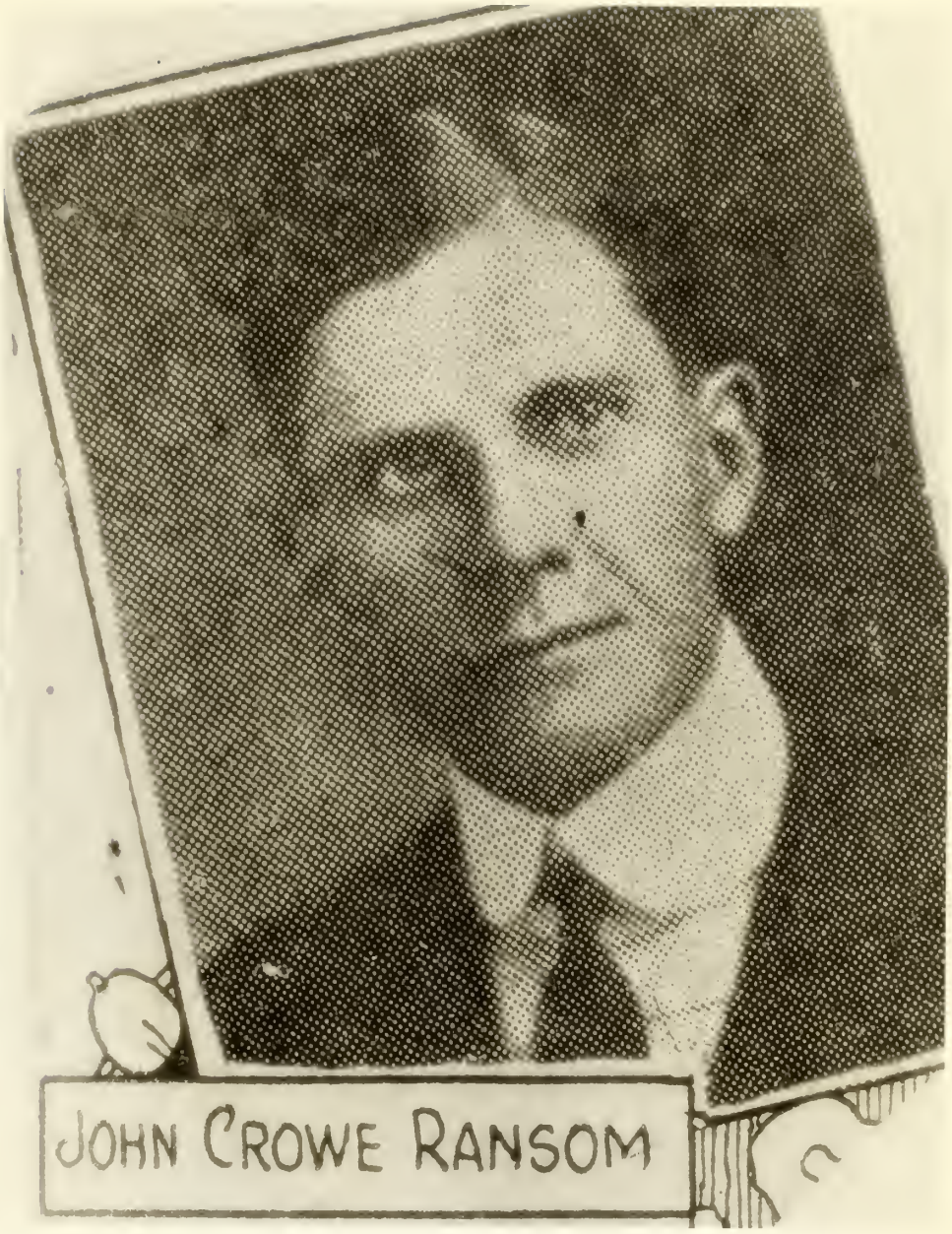
Donald Davidson

Walter Clyde Curry.

[illegible]

Merrill Moore.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM



JOHN CROWE RANSOM

PART III

BIOGRAPHIES

According to Donald Davidson[1] poetry comes from the individual and there will be as many variations as there are individuals writing it. If this is true, we will be better able to understand the poetry of the Fugitives when we know some of the details of each individual's life. Since it is generally agreed that John Crowe Ransom was the spiritual force and guiding light of the Fugitive group, it is appropriate to present this poet first. There has been no effort to present the work or biographies of any of these poets in the order of their poetic or personal ability or fame.

1. John Crowe Ransom

On April 30, 1888, John Crowe Ransom was born in Pulaski, Tennessee, of Scotch-Irish descent. He was the son of a local minister and was educated in his own state and abroad: he received his B. A. degree at Vanderbilt University in 1909 and his M. A. at Oxford in 1923. In the latter course, he was Rhodes Scholar from Tennessee, taking the "Greats" (Classical) Course. Professor Ransom had been an associate professor of English at Vanderbilt since 1914, save for two years when he was with the A. E. F. It was a great loss to Vanderbilt University when he re-

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[1] "Certain Fallacies in Modern Poetry", Fugitive, Vol. III, No. 3.

cently accepted a position as professor of English at Kenyon College, Bamgier, Ohio.

Mr. Ransom's first book, Poems about God, appeared in 1919 and was a raw first book with a tang of bitter humor. Here was no Southern gentleman's proverbial courtliness, unctuous and micing gallantry; here was a bristling acerbity blurted in strong if uncertain utterance. The lines ranged from the roughly powerful to the surprisingly banal.[1] Five years later Chills and Fever showed a great change in Ransom's poetry. Here we have a curiously involved speech used to clothe his semi-whimsical, semi-ironic philosophy. Ransom strikes his note with a sureness that is almost defiant. He is witty, but his wit is strengthened by passion; he turns from dialectical finish to sudden emotion. Surprise is his forte; he can weave patterns that are, at one time, fanciful and learned. Such music, half soothing, half stinging is new in our poetry; the modulations are strange, the cadences charming in their slight irregularities. He delights in pairing such slant rimes as 'drunkard conquered', 'little scuttle', 'ready steady'. This Southerner will never be a popular poet. He is too irregular, his vocabulary is meticulous to the point of being elaborate, his utterances are often so finical as to seem pedantic.

In 1924 the Hogarth Press, London, published Grace After Meals, a collection of poems from two other books of poetry by Mr. Ransom. It was sponsored by T. S. Eliot and introduced by Robert Graves, who eneded

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[1] Modern American Poetry, p. 436.

his foreword saying--

> Ransom is doing for his own state what Frost has done for New England, Vachel Lindsay for his middle West, Carl Sandbourg [sic] for Chicago. Such poets are the forerunners of a National American school that will one day produce synthesis of all regional contributions. One does not have to echo all the English writer's prophecy to accord Ransom his distinct autochthonous place nor to acknowledge that his influence has spread beyond the Nashville Group he so strongly affected. He is especially interested in the Agrarian movement in the South and has written various articles on this subject. Ransom and T. S. Eliot are concerned with the same problem, wit and irony is the method used to present it. There is a special kind of loneliness shown in Ransom's poems. He can find community with neither man nor nature and he would seek another country. The 'Amphibious Crocodile' is a splendid example of the comedy, wit, and satire found in Ransom's poems. It details the adventures of an American globe trotter who tries to travel, projects, affaires de coeur, religion, psychoanalysis, and metaphysics, but in the end can only with nostalgic tears resort to his primal mud.

"The poetry of John Crowe Ransom is peculiarly systematic. It refers regularly to the centre which is precise and has been objectively formulated by the poet himself, although not in relation to his poetry. Ransom's argument is not the abolition but the correction of science; that is, the interruption of science in the thought context of human experience. The essential quality of the Agrarian establishment presumably, would provide fuller opportunity for the play of man's sensibility or in other words, for the play of his proper humanity--the harmonious adjustment of thought and feeling. Ransom has been merely concerned to defend man against a revolution which, by a dogma of unadulterated unreason has endangered his sensibilities; which has, in fact, promoted to dissociation."[1]

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[1] Robert Penn Warren, "A Study in Irony", loc. cit.

The question of the South, regionalism, and agrarianism are of the greatest importance to Mr. Ransom. He believes that the unitary South has passed and that not even in a bare electoral sense is the South solid any more. He tells us that in war the South lost her army by attrition, and that in peace when the political defenses were down there was another process at work: the gradual uneven insistent penetration of the region by foreign ideas. He gives us an excellent analyzation and understanding of the Southern problem, and a clear intelligent story of the peculiar labor situation in the South. The Southern laborer will not work as fast as other laborers, and the income from agriculture will never be sufficient to permit the Southern farmer to pay high taxes. Mr. Ransom believes that it is not by money-farming that farmers can hold their property and live in decent comfort, but rather by the combination of subsistence-farming and money-farming.

> The special position of agriculture in America presents these features, therefore: Liability, a natural and permanent capitalization which is grievously excessive, and which makes it impossible for it to survive as a pure money-making business; assets, first the privacy and independence which attaches to its pursuit, and second, the unique advantage of subsistence without regard to money income.[1]

Mr. Ransom believes that in view of the special liability of the Southern agriculture and the fact that farmers are a class whom the nation should delight to honor there should be special treatment for them. He thinks that they should have good paved roads, relief from land taxes, free domestic market, first-class education for their children, electri-

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[1] John Crowe Ransom, "What Does the South Want?", Who Owns America.

city delivered at their door, and a tenure of their jobs. He believes that the houses should be brought up to a standard of decent habitableness with plumbing and sufficient room.[1]

Mr. Ransom's religious perceptions are found in God Without Thunder: "There are two objectives at which the religious purpose of an intelligent private citizen has to drive. One is scarcely more important and indispensable than the other. But while it might well be possible to realize one of them, it is to realize both of them at once. One is a religion to be intensely loyal, with gods whom he may fear and love, and whose commandments represent for him the deepest wisdom. The other is simply a religion with the sanction of his own natural society behind it."

"With whatever religious institution a modern man may be connected, let him try to turn it back to orthodoxy.

"Let him insist in a virile and concrete God, and accept no Principles as a substitute.

"Let him restore to God the thunder.

"Let him resist the usurpation of the Godhead by the soft modern version of the Christ, and try to keep the Christ for what he professed to be: The Demigod who came to do honor to the God."

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[1] New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1930.

ALLEN TATE

Mr. Tate's poems sublimated by his trasposition of r omantic South and realistic North. He has a finesse of satire and dissection of emotion in most of his mature poems. Structure is preëminent, but the poet emphasizes form without being a slave to it. Tate himself has said his method consists in playing the role of a hawk, gradually encircling round it by threatening it, filling it with suspense, and finally accomplishing its demise without ever quite using the ultimate violence upon it.[1]

Mr. Tate was the most unpredictable and belligerent of the Group. He turned from poetry to biograph, from biography to criticism, from criticism to controversies, from controversies back to poetry. Everything he did was achieved with distinction and dispatch,--everything except his poetry. His poetry continually called for revision.[2]

"Not even the once accredited prince, T. S. Eliot, has escaped the logically worded wrath of the Nashville knight. Tate's latest prince is Hart Crane; and from imitating Eliot he has turned to imitating the youthful Clevelander. He goes into tempests over literary tea cups, when he ought to shoot his fine energies at bigger game. He has poetic talent and a critical genius of which he has given demonstration."[3]

His religious ponderings are seen in the last two stanzas of "Ignis Fatuus":

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[1] Louis Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry, 5th ed., p. 596.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Alfred Kreymborg, A History of American Poetry, p. .

High in what hills, by what illuminations
Are you intelligible? Your fierce latinity,
Beyond the nubian bulwark of the sea,
Sustains the immaculate sight.

To the green tissues of the subterranean
Worm I have come back, two-handed from
The chase, and empty. I have pondered it
Carefully; I have asked: What is the riot
When the pigeon molts his ease
Or exile utters the creed of memory?

We find other of Mr. Tate's conceptions in his "Remarks on the Southern Religion".[1] In this essay he has dealt with the question of religion in the South and the possibility of its aiding the South to regain its economic serenity. He says "the South could blindly return to an older secular policy, but the world was too much with it, and it could not create its appropriate religion. Because the South never created a fitting religion, the social structure of the South began grievously to break down two generations after the Civil War; for the social structure depends on the economic structure, and economic conviction is the secular image of religion. No nation is ever simply and unequivocally beaten in the war; nor was the South. The South shows signs of defeat and this is due to its lack of religion which would make her special secular system the inevitable and permanently valuable one."

Mr. Tate says a poet does not have any experience; he is "merely an anonymous machine for concoting experiences for readers".[2]

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[1] I'll Take My Stand, p. 155.

[2] New Masses, January 11, 1938.

In the "Rooftree"[1] Mr. Tate indicates his attitude towards the times:

> The times have changed, there is not left of us,
> The vice of privilege, the law of form--
> Who of our kin was pusillanimous
> And took the world so easy, so by storm?

In another section of the same poem Mr. Tate shows his intense interest in keeping the South an Agrarian section:

> Captains of industry, your aimless power
> Awakens harsh velleities of time,
> Let your brother, a captain in your hour
> Be zealous that your numbers are all prime
> Lest false division with sly mathematic
> Plunder the inner mansion of our blood--
> The Thracian swollen with pride besiege the Attic
> Fierce lumber-jack felling the sacred wood:
> Yet the prime secret whose simplicity
> Your towering engine hammers to reduce,
> Though driven holds that bulwark of the sea
> Which breached will turn unspeaking fury loose
> To drown out him who swears to rectify
> Infinity--that has nor ear nor eye.

In reply to a question as to the value of "little" magazines, Mr. Tate says:[2]

> As a rule they give the illusion of authorship to persons of little talent, who would otherwise not get their work printed. But there are always persons of real talent, doing something new and distinguished, who can't get a hearing in the established magazines; for these the little magazine, like the Fugitive, is probably better than immediate publication in the big metropolitan journals. In this way the Fugitive group developed several distinctive kinds of poetry that we might not have today if the poets had sent their first work to the large journals and had it rejected.

The political views of Mr. Tate are summed up in his essay "Notes on Liberty and Property".[3] He believes that what we need is not absolute freedom which is impossible and relative--but a little of freedom

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[1] Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2.

[2] Letter to author, April 10, 1938. [3] Who Owns America.

--as much as can be got when the majority of men own small units of production, whether factory or farms. Our objective should be private business and not big corporations as it has been to date.

At present Mr. Tate is Professor of English at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, Carolina. He continues to write poetry and critical essays on literature as well as on the economic and political situation of the South.

MERRILL MOORE

3. Merrill Moore

Merrill Moore was born September 11, 1903, at Columbia, Tennessee. His father was John Trotwood Moore and his mother was Mary Brown Daniel Moore. He attended public schools and prepared for college at Montgomery Bell Academy in Nashville, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1924 and that of Doctor of Medicine in 1928 from Vanderbilt University.

Although he served an interneship in Boston and still practises there, his backgrounds are entirely Southern. His father, the historian, was from Alabama; his mother from Missouri. His clinical training has been at St. Thomas's Hospital, 1928-1929; Neurological House Officer, Boston City Hospital, 1929-1930; Resident Neurological Physician, Boston City Hospital, 1930-1931; Assistant Physician, Boston Psychopathic Hospital, 1931-1932; Commonwealth Fellow, Boston Psychopathic Hospital, 1932-1935; Graduate Assistant, Psychiatric Clinc (Neurological Out-Patient-Department) Massachusetts General Hospital, 1933-1934; Junior Visiting Physician, Boston City Hospital, 1934-1935. Psychoanalytical training was begun with the late Dr. William Herman, 1931-1933, and continued with Dr. Hanns Sachs, of Boston, 1934-1935.

He married Anne Leslie Nichol of Nashville, Tennessee, in 1930. They have four children--three sons, Adam, John, and Leslie, and one daughter, Hester. His home is at 392 Springfield Street, Boston. Since 1935 he has been engaged in private practice of psychiatry at 384 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, in association with a group of psychiatrists.

He is still much interested in writing as an avocation and is the author of several books of poetry.[1] It is estimated that he has written about 50,000 sonnets, and he continues to write poems and medical essays withgreat ease and rapidity. It is often stated that Dr. Moore does not revise his sonnets, but, as a matter of fact, he often improves and changes many of his poems.[2]

Dr. Moore has an amazingly energetic and vivacious personality and is the optimistic, efficient type of person who makes many friends and who is generously interested in applying some of his energy in helping his patients and friends adjust themselves to life. Evidences of his interest in humanity and his practice of psychiatry are found in many of his poems. Donald Davidson tells us that:

"Merrill Moore was on terms of perfectly equal friendliness with janitors and college professors, with street sweepers and railroad presidents. He was one of those extraordinary people who have a way of being always at the center of everything. If an accident happens on the street, fate will have it that Merrill Moore should be passing. All he sees, which is a tremendous lot, is grist to his mill, and as poetic grist it is all the more useful, because of his catholic sympathies give him a curiously immediate insight into the complex of inner relationships of men and things. Whatever he is doing he is not too busy to enter into a whole-hearted discussion of one's own interests. He never forgets and his chuck full of good sound advice. Approaching any problem from the

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[1] The Noise that Time Makes (1929); Six Sides to a Man (1935); Poems From the Fugitive; Sonnets from the Fugitive (1937); Sonnets from New Directions (1938)

[2] Information received from Dr. Moore.

strange angle of the scientific and the psychic he soon dissipates the trouble, if imaginary, or, if real, offers sound plans for subjugation."

When Merrill Moore's volume of sonnets, The Noise That Time Makes, appeared[1] it was awarded the prize of the poetry society of South Carolina for the best poems of the year by a Southerner. "At that time it was said of Merrill Moore that he was not merely a leading poet in the South or in the United States or in the year 1930 but that he takes rank among the great poets of all time."[2]

"His memory and imagination range so freely that they provide his verses with incessant surprises. His favorite medium is a fourteen-line unit tolerably capable of scansion and variously rimed

"Whether or not they are sonnets is perfectly arbitrary, a matter of definition. It is because Merrill Moore is an inevitable founder of charming novelties that he has done what I doubt if any other living poet could do; that is, to publish himself fully, delicately, and beautifully in a book composed entirely of sonnets or quasi-sonnets."[3]

Louis Untermeyer refers[4] to Dr. Moore's sonnets as American and says that he may well be pioneering in a variety of form as native as Petrarch's arrangement was Italian and Shakespeare's was English. He says there is something distinctive and autochthonous in the loosened, speech-inflected writers; in the heightened tempo of the lines; in the substitution of a set of unpredictable and even syncopated writers, in-

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[1] In June 1929.

[2] Editorial, Nashville Tennessean, June 6, 1930.

[3] John Crowe Ransom in the Preface to The Noise That Time Makes by Merrill Moore (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1930).

[4] Louis Untermeyer, Sewanee Review, January 1935.

stead of well-neglected rhyme-schemes; in the refusal of the poet to split neatly into the traditional octave and sestet, and to divide itself anywhere with what seems sheer perversity. These sonnets are American in a broader sense, Mr. Untermeyer continues. They are not braggart; they do not celebrate any particular section of the country; there is none of the large spread-eagle affirmation which is un-national reaction to the contempt and weariness of a "lost" generation. This poetry is American in attitude as well as in subject matter--in its insatiable appetite and unsated curiosity, in its combination of naïve egotism and astounding detachment, its excesses of awe and flippancy, its puzzled insecurity.[1] Merrill Moore is no cloistered poet; he is a man of action, a doctor, a personality of varied and lively interests. His sonnets reflect him wholly.

The following lines give us some idea of the religious philosophy of Dr. Moore:

> And through this smooth perfection and beauty only
> Can I believe there somewhere powers be.[2]

Dr. Moore's philosophy of death might be found in his poem, "A Warning To One"[3] in which he says:

> Death is the strongest of all living things
> And when it happens do not look in the eyes
> For a death fire or a lack-luster there,
> But listen for the words that fall from lips
> Or do not fall. Silence is not death;
> It merely means that the one who is conveying breath
> Is not concerned with tattle and small quips.

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[1] Louis Untermeyer, Epilogue to Six Sides of a Man (1935).

[2] "To A Fetish", Vol. I, No. 2.

[3] Louis Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry.

An interesting phase of his philosophy on life is found in "It is Winter, I know":

IT IS WINTER, I KNOW[1]

What if small birds are peppering the sky,
Scudding south with the clouds to an ultimate tip on lands
Where they may peck worms and slugs from moist sands
Rather muddily mixed with salt?

Or if wind dashes by
Insufferably filled with birds' indeclinable twitter
Not deigning to toy with the oak-twigs that it passes
And treading but lightly on all the delicate grasses
Under trees where crickets are silent, where mad leaves flutter?

It is winter, I know, there are too many Nays now confronting
The obdurate soul that would trick itself into believing
That buds are still ripe, that cells are all ready for cleaving;
It can only be winter, winter alone, when blunting
Winds rush over the ice, scattering leaves from their weeds
To rattle the sycamore tree's dry-shriveled seeds.

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[1] Louis Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry.

ROBERT PENN WARREN

4. Robert Penn Warren

Robert Penn Warren was born in Todd County, Kentucky, April 24, 1905. His education was widely scattered: he received his B. A. at Vanderbilt University in 1925 and his M. A. at the University of California in 1927. He attended Yale Graduate School for a time and, Oxford where he was a Rhodes Scholar,--B. Litt., 1930. He was the youngest of the Fugitive group, sharing their sectional differences, though less pronouncedly local than most. Upon his return to America he began teaching, first at Vanderbilt, later in Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, besides conducting conferences in writing at the universities of Montana and Colorado. He was the founder of the Southern Review and, with Cleanth Brooks Jr., is one of the managing editors of it. His remarkable work on this magazine has established him as one of the leading editors in the country.

John Brown (1929) is a biography in prose, differing radically in tone and treatment from Benet's John Brown's Body. Warren's poetry is more certain than his prose; it has iron beneath its grace. Intellectual in its origins, Warren's verse remains closer to the earth than the work of his confreres; fertile in strong images, its strength no less than its fecundity rises from Kentucky soil. The critical mind is always at work here, but not so insistently as to inhibit the creative imagination. In his early twenties, Warren has already accomplished a fusion: in his lime-tinctured phrases, form and feeling are one.

"The vigor of 'Pro Vita Sua' reveals a poet who can combine the latest devices with an almost Saxon strength."[1] "Lately Warren has mixed

[1]Modern American Poetry, p. 622.

the metaphysical with the physical. His references to the flesh are frankly salacious, and in keeping with the highest tenets of hard-boiled literature. Grandfather Gabriel who has: 'rallied and whored and ginned with the best' married Grandmother Martha in a white wedding gown, and Gabriel pronounces his son'a fine little bastard'."[1] Several of Mr. Warren's literary perceptions are found in his essay "Literature as a Symptom".[2] He says the current rationalizations and rituals are numerous; the prescriptions vary from critic to critic and from artist to artist. The 'regional movement' and the 'proletarian movement' are the two rationalizations in greatest vogue at this moment. The regional movement may be defined, in brief and in part, as the attempt of the writer to reason himself into the appropriate relation to the past; the proletarian attempts to reason himself into the appropriate relation to the future. The regional writer connects the idea of property with his idea of the relation of man to place, for ownership gives a man a stake in a place and helps to define his, or the region's, organic relation to society. The proletarian writer has a bias towards industrialism and generally treats of life in a manufacturing or commercial center; the regional writer usually, but not necessarily, has an agrarian bias and writes, not of the metropolis but of the Hinterland which is his own by accident or election. There is one important aspect which the two movements, as literary movements, share in common: both are revolutionary. Both the proletarian and the regional writer are dissatisfied with the present

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[1] Kreymborg, Our Singing Strength, p. 566.

[2] In the symposium Who Owns America, p. 264.

relation of the writer to society. The destructive criticism may frequently be presented in terms of either the regional or the proletarian movement; both may be said to be opposed to finance--capitalism and to resent the indignity heaped by that system of society upon the creative impulse. Both movements have developed a certain faddishness: this is inevitable, and does not imply, necessarily, a criticism of ideas of either movement. Mr. Warren believes that if the writer has thought long and deeply his works will be"found to carry along with them a 'purpose' as for the more than usual organic sensibility",[1] that is the act of God.

~~Professor~~ Warren has published numerous poems, reviews, essays, and stories, in various magazines, including the New Republic, The Nation, The Virginia Quarterly Review, Poetry, This Quarter, The Southern Review, and so forth.

> Robert Penn Warren's prose fiction differs from most of the work being done today by competent or talented even brilliant writers, in that it seems to emanate from an inexhaustible creative energy. This statement is of course not subject to any proof except that of the individual'reader's pulse, but I believe that all his readers will feel communicated to them this rare quality which is, it seems to me, the equivalent of genius; they will feel it perhaps not in, but certainly behind every line he writes. There is no more restful or stimulating experience in reading than that of trusting the author to produce lavish bounty without impoverishing himself, to canalize the flow of his imagination without wringing it dry.
>
> Mr. Warren's background, too, is apparently inexhaustible. He knows his own section of this country--the South--as a villager knows his own village. He knows it besides in a way that few people ever know anything--for he has studied and absorbed its history, its speech, and above all its relationship to the rest of the country and the tides of culture. His narrative style is sparse and downright, and his method in story-telling is entirely lacking in direct comment, but the poet,

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[1]Quotation from Wordsworth by Professor Warren.

> the story-teller, and the critic in Mr. Warren apparently function fully and harmoniously whenever he writes, and so all of his work is not only vivid as an experience but is also indirectly a comment on some aspect of the social scene. He seems, in short, destined to be one of America's foremost men of letters.[1]

Mr. Edmund Wilson says[2] that Mr. Warren seems one of the most promising of poets who has recently appeared. He calls his style stony, nodulous and tight, and says his master of language and his subtlety of mind seem developed disproportionately to his emotions and ideas, which are still rather vague and immature. He suspects that Robert Penn Warren's real poems are yet to be written. Whether or not his Thirty-six Poems[3] will meet these requirements, Mr. Wilson might be able to decide.

Robert Penn Warren's attitude toward the negro is logical and humane. He believes that if the white man feels agrarian life to have a certain irreplaceable value in his society, and he hopes to maintain its integrity in the face of industrialism or its dignity in the face of agricultural depression, he must find a place for the negro in his scheme. He believes that the Southern white man wishes the negro well and wishes to see crime, genial unresponsibility, ignorance, and oppression replaced by informed and productive negro community. The chief problem for the white man and the negro is the restoration of society at large to a balance and security which the industrial regime is far from promising to achieve. "Inter-racial conferences and the devices of organized philanthropy, in comparison with the major concern, are only palliatives that distract the South's attention from the main issue."[4]

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[1] Eleanor Carroll Chilton, Appreciation of Robert Penn Warren, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1936.

[2] "The Tennessee Poets", New Republic, March 7, 1928.

[3] The Alcestis Press, 1935.

[4] "The Briar Patch", I'll Take My Stand.

Robert Penn Warren's latest novel, Night Rider, to be published in the fall of 1938 won one of the fellowship awards of $1,000 which are given by Houghton Mifflin Company to a man or a woman who has literary ability and high intellectual and personal qualifications. He was awarded the poetry prize of the Poetry Society of South Carolina twice and once won the Levinson Prize awarded through Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.[1]

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[1] Information received from Professor Warren in a letter to the author.

PRO SUA VITA

Nine months I waited in the dark beneath
Her tired heart for this precious breath,

And month by month since I left her breast
Her breath and blood I have given in waste,

Till now at length some peace she has got
That her breath and blood in me have not.

In the strictured nights of glimmering snow
The blood drives quick though breath is slow,

And through the August afternoon
Flees the breath faintly but too soon.

So blood is lost to the brutal gardens
Where the iron petal of dark frost hardens,

And breath, when the storm-black trees bowed under,
Waited the fanged astounding thunder.

Shall I say to my father then
Among the belted best of men:

"Fellow, you tupped her years ago
That tonight my boots might crunch the snow.

"And, women, you show your son to wait
Till the breath and distraught blood abate;

"As my father began the tale of waste
When the sullen head slept on your breast,

"So the rigid hills had been forgot
In darkness, if God had wasted not."

--Robert Penn Warren

DONALD DAVIDSON

5. Donald Davidson

Donald Davidson was born August 18, 1893, in Campbellsville, Tennessee, was educated in his native stated, and received his B. A. and M. A. degrees at Vanderbilt University. The son of a schoolteacher, he has taught, first in high schools and later at Vanderbilt University. He was literary editor of the Nashville Tennessean.

His first volume, An Outland Piper, was published in 1924. The diversity of its contents discloses, beneath a certain amount of echoing, a surplus of poetic energy. Although it is evident that Davidson is still "emerging", a fresh voice rises from the verses, even the most derivative.

The Tall Men (1927) is a work on a much larger canvas than anything previously attempted by Davidson. It testified to an interesting phenomenon: that the Tennessee group was not at all "South-conscious" while it was publishing the Fugitive, but became very much so immediately upon the demise of its organ. The Tall Men is written in a framework derived from Eliot on the one hand and Masters on the other, and contrasts the Tennessee of the hunters and soldiers with the Tennessee of the Buick-drivers. Fire on Belmont Street, perhaps Davidson's finest poem, was awarded the Souther Prize Poem for 1926. Stephen Vincent Benet says of The Tall Men: "Mr. Davidson has built up a people, a State, a passage of time, and one man's mind."

In "A Mirror for Artists"[1] Mr. Davidson's artistic viewpoint as it

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[1] I'll Take My Stand, p. 59.

affects the South is found:

> We should not here fall into the typically American mistake of imagining that admonition will succeed in getting the Southern artist to perform more like a Southerner and a provincial. For many reasons the Southern tradition deserves rehabilitation, but not among them is the reason that it would thus enable the Southern artists to be strictly Southern artists. If the Southern tradition were an industrial tradition, it would deserve to be cast out rather than cherished. It happens, however, to be an agrarian tradition. And so it needs to be defined for the present age, as a mode of life congenial to the arts which are among the things we esteem as more than material blessings. In the emergency it needs, in fact, to be consciously studied and maintained by artists, Southern or not, as affording a last stand in America against the industrial devourer --a stand that might prove to be a turning point.
>
> The artist should not forget that in these times he is called on to play the part of a person and of an artist. Of the two, that of person is more immediately important. As an artist he will do best to flee the infection of our times, to stand for decentralization in the arts, to resist with every atom of his strength the false gospels of art as a luxury which can be sold in commercial quantities or which can be hallowed by segregation in discreet shrines. But he cannot wage this fight by remaining on his perch as artist. He must be a person first of all, even though for the time being he may become less of an artist. He must enter the common arena and become a citizen. Whether he chooses, as citizen-person, to be a farmer or to run for Congress is a matter of individual choice; but in that general direction his duty lies.

Mr. Davidson's political philosophy agrees, in most respects, with that of Allen Tate. He discusses a principle which, if followed out in American life, would of itself eliminate much of the necessity for new mechanisms of government.

> It has two parts, which might be thus stated: first, it is the nature of industrial enterprise, corporate monopoly, and high finance to devour, to exploit, to imperialize; and a region which specializes in these functions is by that fact driven to engage in imperial conquest of one sort or another: second, it is the nature of small business, well-distributed property, and an agrarian regime to stay at home and be content with modest returns. The region that specializes in these things, or that balances them with its industry in fair proportions, is a good neighbor, not desiring conquest. Whatever restores

> small property, fosters agrarianism and curtails exaggerated industrialism is on the side of regional autonomy. If we had a firm balance of this sort in America, it is possible that the Old Federalism, with very small changes, would suffice our modern purposes.
>
> But so firmly entrenched is the ancient enemy of all good balance, it is possible that regionalism must be called in as one of the means of dislodging him. If a given region is too hard-pressed, if it is denied recourse, if it is irritated by an assumption of superior piety, then regionalists will think of the old watchword, independence.[1]

Donald Davidson will teach courses in Romantic Poets and American Folklore at the Bread Loaf School of English, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont, during the summer session of June 21 to August 13, 1938. He has been a member of the faculty of this college for the past seven years. His latest book The Attack on Leviathan[2] is a collection of essays on regionalism and sectionalism and was reviewed by Allen Tate in the News and Observer, Raleigh, North Carolina, March 13, 1938.

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1. "That This Nation May Endure", Who Owns America?, ibid.
2. Donald Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1938

LITANY

When the weather beats wild
And the wind's at the door,
Do not waken the child.
Let it slumber on,
As it will, softly, with coverlets drawn,
Deaf to rattle and roar.

Too soon, too soon,
It must bow its head
To the curse of the moon
And the hate of the sun,
For the ground is to break and the furrow's
  to run,
And the sheaves are too bind for our bread.

Do not waken the child
When the win'd's at the door
And weather beats wild.
Let it slumber, not know
How the lightnings terribly flash and go
Leaving worse dark than before.

--Donald Davidson

Utterance

I am not what my lips explain,
And more devotedly inclined
Than these dry sentences reveal
That break in crude shards from my mind.

What way is there of gesturing
The cruelly impounded thought?
It comes, it pierces me like steel,
It flames, but I can utter naught.

The soul, so struggling to upheave
Its changeful self, the wistful me,
Is caught in labyrinthean ways
And tangled irrevocably.

And am I worth the guess you make?
O fact so digged in circumstance!
It surely is not known to me,
And you must take my Self on chance.

--Donald Davidson

ALEC BROCK STEVENSON

ALEC B. STEVENSON

6. Alec Brock Stevenson

Alec Brock Stevenson was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, December 29, 1895. He obtained his A.B. degree from Vanderbilt University and was one of the original members of the Fugitive group, contributing seventeen poems to the Fugitive.

The skill and beauty of Imprisonment, which appeared in the first issue of the Fugitive, gives one the impression that Mr. Stevenson would continue to write poetry and become well known in the literary world. His Complaint of a Melancholy Lover, which appeared in the last issue, does not sustain the prognosis.

Imprisonment[1]

The lightning feet of years appalled her heart,
Swift days that left a restless love uncrowned;
She sighed, and smiled at me with piteous art,
Wishing for ending, death, or sleep as sound.

With bitter Spring and hateful silence stricken,
Choked with expository words unsaid,
I stopped her lips with mine, quaked lest I waken
The shouting fear that love might yet lie dead.

The moon assisted, and the present stars;
They went unheeded; we were blind that night,
Blundered against our own dear prison bars
And loosed our listless hands and groped for light.

But forgetfulness shall drown me many things
But never how the April cricket sings.

--Alec B. Stevenson

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[1] From the first edition of the Fugitive.

To A Wise Man

He gave me much of wisdom; he was wise;
Wherefore my backward-looking eyes are dim
And questions blank and unillumined skies
Asking how best I shall remember him;

Not as with those kind arms in stillness folded
And not with gray hairs fashioned into rest,
Pale forehead, lips by no dear smiling molded,
And eyes withdrawn from glories in the west.

Then I must think of logging roads and rain,
And thrushes dripping song like silver foam.
The slight fern's rooted feathers, and again
Across the lake the golden lamps of home:

The rustling path, the lonely woodland clover,
The stream, and his brown hand to help me over!

--Alec Brock Stevenson

WILLIAM YANDELL ELLIOTT

7. William Yandell Elliott

William Yandell Elliott was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, May 12, 1896. He attended Vanderbilt University, the University of Paris (Sorbonne), and Balliol College, Oxford, from which he holds the degrees of B.A., M.A., and Ph.D., respectively. He is now assistant professor and Chairman of the Department of Government, Harvard University.

He appeared in the Fugitive for the first time in Volume I, Number 3, with the poems Epigrams and Roundhead and Cavalier. Altogether he contributed seven poems to the Oxford Poetry (1923) and to L. A. Strong's Best Poems of 1925. He has also contributed articles to the journals and press and is the author of The Pragmatic Revolt in Politics, The New British Empire, International Control in the Non-Ferrous Metals, and The Need for Constitutional Reform. An interesting review of this last book was written by Norman Thomas.[1]

While Professor Elliott was a Rhodes Scholar at Balliol College he wrote his first article on the political thought of Mr. Laski entitled "The Politics of Mr. H. J. Laski".[2] In 1935 his article "The Modern State: Karl Marx and Mr. Laski" shows us that Professor Elliott's greatest interests are politics, economics, finance, and criticism rather than poetry.[3]

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[1] The Southern Review, Autumn 1935.

[2] American Political Science Review, 1924.

[3] Information received from Professor Elliott.

LAURA RIDING GOTTSCHALK

8. Laura Riding Gottschalk

Laura Riding Gottschalk, who now writes under the name of Laura Riding, was born in Louisville, Kentucky, January 16, 1901. "Miss Riding is aloofly the intellectual. She is almost exasperatingly elliptical. The stampe of an unusual interesting personality is upon her. Her work has recently strongly influenced the work of an English poet, Robert Graves (the title for her book The Close Chaplet is taken from one of his poems). Now he is constantly in intellectual throes. Miss Riding is constantly in intellectual throes too. She is capable of beautiful statement; but she is rarely capable of clear statement. Her poems may be poems of the future, but it is beyond our wits. We can appreciate the cadences, but it is in a foreign tongue. It is because Miss Riding sometimes reveals decided power over word and phrase that one loathes such nonsense as "His face dripped not like rain on his cravat,' and sighs deeply over such an arid demonstration as 'The Quids'. The Gertrude Stein sort of thing sometimes intrudes intolerably. Our conviction is, on the other hand, that Miss Riding is genuinely gifted, if she would not hack and disfigure forms of poetry just as her chisel is releasing them from the marble. There is a discipline she recks not of and needs badly to learn. This is the development of clarity and the establishment of communication with intelligent readers whose time is now spent in climbing barricades of complicated implication to arrive at doubtful meanings. 'From mouths spring forth vocabularies,' she says in one poem, and in much of her work one cannot see the wood for the trees, the concept for the vocabulary.

"Miss Riding disdains appeal to the senses, to the emotions; she would speak to the critical mind aloofly and with Protean subtlety. But her sibylline leaves flutter dryly, and the Cryptic remains the worm in the bud. Poetry, it seems to us, needs a much richer equipment than this. Above everything it should seize us out of ourselves with immediacy."[1]

Alfred Kreymborg[2] says "he finds himself rather bedazzled and befuddled by the muse of Laura Riding." He believes that she is strongly influenced by Gertrude Stein and is unable to decide whether Laura Riding is a genius, an eccentric, or a Dilettante. He thinks her poetry does have meaning, although he cannot understand "The Quids".

Of herself Laura Riding says: "Since I was born I have engaged in certain minute investigations. I have had few assistants because the results of these investigations are not merely inner-statistical, but are heart-breaking residue--those living phenomena which have been able to survive time.

"I do not use words as instruments of literary invention, only as instruments for determining exactly how much of human thought is comparable with truth. I do not regard anything except what is stated in poetic form as finally true. I am never impatient with any one but myself, and this only when I have made some mistake of judgment. But I make few mistakes, and no mistake of mine stays long uncorrected. Music is to me poetic crime; I like it if it is honestly perverse as I like crime stories into which moral considerations do not enter. For sculp-

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[1] Review of The Close Chaplet (London: Hogarth Press, 1926) in Sat. Rev. of Lit., Feb 11, 1928.

[2] History of Modern Poetry, p. 567.

ture I like accidental formation. I do not like what people call creative activity of any kind. I like men to be men and women to be women, but I think that bodies have had their day. I think on the whole there is no help for Americans; they will pass, nearly every one. I do not really mind the French. I very much mind the Germans. I sympathize with the negroes and with the Spanish. Indians are wicked but feeble. The English are the only people to be considered seriously."[1]

Miss Riding's relationship to the Fugitive group was never very active, as she lived in Louisville while the group was meeting in Nashville. She attended only about two meetings of the group and had membership conferred upon her as recognition of her literary distinctions and creative ability.[2] For the last few years her home has been on the island of Majorca and did much of her writing there before the Spanish Civil War made it necessary for her to leave there. She has written nine volumes of poems, seven volumes of prose, and has collaborated, chiefly with Robert Graves, on several other works including the Survey of Modernist Poetry. Her temporary home is now in England at 31 Alama Square, St. John's Wood, London. Her latest book is Trojan Ending, and others of her latest books are: Contemporaries and Snobs, Anarchism Is Not Enough, and Progress of Stories.[3]

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[1] Quoted in Living Authors (reference book).

[2] Information received from Merrill Moore.

[3] Isabel Lorber Mayer (Miss Riding's sister), letter to author, April 15, 1938.

WALTER CLYDE CURRY


WALTER
CLYDE
CURRY

9. Walter Clyde Curry

Walter Clyde Curry was born in 1887 at Grey-Court, South Carolina, He received his A.B. from Wolford College, Spartansburg, South Carolina, in 1909, his M.A. from Leland Stanford University in 1913, and his Ph.D. from Leland Stanford in 1915.

Professor Curry is the author of Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty, published at Baltimore in 1916, and Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences, published at New York in 1926. He has contributed articles to The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Publications of the Modern Language Association, Anglia, Englische Studien, Philological Quarterly, Modern Philology, Modern Language Notes, The Texas Review, and The Sewanee Review. He has also published poems in the Stratford Journal and The American Poetry Magazine. At present Professor Curry is professor in English at Vanderbilt University, and a specialist in Chaucer.

Professor Curry is married to Kathryn Worth, a writer of children's poetry. Of his connection with the Fugitives he says, "I was only a Hanger-on, as it were, and contributed very few poems to the magazine".[1] One of the most interesting of the poems written by him appeared in Vol. III, No. 2.

Moisture

He mixed one drop too much of a moisture
With this slow dust, this bankside clod;

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[1] Letter from Dr. Curry to the author, March 28, 1938.

It stirred and shivered to the sun,
With lusty thirst cried, "Cursed be God".

And I surmise that three grey flowers
Are fragile recompense, or worse,
For such outspringings of the soil
To the statured wisdom of a curse.

WILLIAM C. FRIERSON

10. William C. Frierson

William Frierson was born in Columbia, Tennesse, February 24, 1897. He was educated at Vanderbilt University and received his B. A. degree in 1920. In 1922 he received his B. A. degree from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He received his doctorate from the University of Paris, in 1925. He was assistant professor of English at Denison University (1923-1924), instructor of English at Ohio State University, 1926-1930, and assistant professor of English at the same university during the years 1930-1933. From 1933 to 1934 he was statistical supervisor for Tennessee, NRS, U. S. Department of Labor, and from 1934 to 1936 he was State Director for the NRS, U. S. Department lf Labor. In 1937 Professor Frierson was assistant professor of English at the University of Alabama, and continues in this capacity at present.

Of himself, Professor Frierson says, "Since I was in Oxford most of the time the Fugitive was being published, my connection with the group was not so close as it might have been, although on my summer vacations I renewed associations. As a matter of fact, I contributed only one or two poems to the magazine, so there is not much to say about my poetry. Any critical influence that I might have had tended toward conservatism".[1]

An example of Professor Frierson's poetry follows:

Reactions on the October Fugitive

I am tired of being bitter.
I am weary of the disillusionists,

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[1] Letter to the author from Professor Frierson, April 3, 1938.

And of those who tell with uncommon zest that corpses stink--
As a joke on the Christians.
It is too poor a jest.
I do not care to be reminded.

I have no claims on heaven--
A tarty lesson of the teens,
Learned on dissecting the brain of a frog;
Endearing the mystery of evening shadows,
Santifying the moonlight's gauze of illusion...
Convincing me of the sinister sterility of irreverence.[1]

His disapproval of realism in poetry seems evident in the above poem. His simple style and disuse of symbolism or vague mystery stamps him as a traditional poet. There is little if anything deeper than the pseudo-statement in this poem.

Professor Frierson has also written "The Naturalistic Technique of Flaubert", French Quarterly, September and December 1925; "L'Influence du Naturalism Français sur le Roman Anglais," Paris, 1925; "Realism in the Eighteen-Nineties and The Maupassant School in England", French Quarterly, March 1928; "The Controversy Over Realism in England", P.M.L.A. June 1928; "Hubert Crackanthorpe, Analyst of the Affections", Sewanee Review, October 1928; "Naturalism in French Fiction", The O. S. U. Press, 1930.

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[2] Fugitive, Vol. I, No. 4.

SIDNEY MTTRON-HIRSCH

SIDNEY MITTRON
HIRSCH

11. Sidney Mttron-Hirsch

It was at the home of Mr. Hirsch that the group of poets met and conceived the idea of the publication of the Fugitive. He is more interested in philosophy than in writing poetry, and is said to read a book every day. He contributed only five poems to the magazine. At present Mr. Hirsch lives in Nashville, Tennesse, and has no regular occupation.

The Little Boy Pilgrim[1]

I am the little boy pilgrim,
 I wander the wold and the sea,
And far past the reach of the star rim
 I mingle my mad minstrelsy.

I walk on the way of the pathless,
 And weep as I beg for my bread,
While all of the vile and the faithless
 They whisper, I tryst with the dead.

Yet I see the moon as a gold belt
 That girdles the world as a bride,
And her mystical love when the stars melt
 In rhapsody's vase undenied.

I see all the glee of the loving;
 The whisper I see and the dream,
When the vases of passion are broken
 In agony's ecstatic stream.

I dance in the fragrance of living;
 I shriek till my nose is a-thrill.
Then I see that the rustics are peeping
 From their boast of the common-sense hill.

They are slaves and the playthings,
 The manna for beetles and plant.
They boast that their common-sense keeps them
 From all that is deemed elegant.

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[1] Vol. I, No. 1.

Then I shriek till they point I am crazy
That they pride their dullness and boast;
Their coarseness a gift rare desired--
All else is a mirth-making ghost.

And all that I saw in the heavens,
And all that I see here between,--
There's nothing so funny for laughing
As the sense that is common and gueen.

JAMES MARSHALL FRANK

JAMES M. FRANK

12. James Marshall Frank

Mr. Frank was a Nashville business man, who was one of the first members of the Fugitive group. He lived with Sidney Mttron-Hirsch and it was at their home that the group met. Although he contributed only four poems to the magazine he had a keen interest in the group and an ability to write poetry. The following poem seems to show poetic skill and creative adroitness.

Silhouette

Ten thousand years of pain had carved her lips,
Her eyes had drunk from every stream of grief;
Volcanic fires had smoldered through her breast
  And wells of tears had flowed for her relief.
  What burdens must they bear--the weak and frail,
Whom Destiny has sent to seek a Grail!

Mirrors

Against the wall the mirror's back was placed,
Into the room it gazed with vacant stare,
But when She came and stood before the glass
Her face appeared--she moved--it was erased.
The mirrored surface now again is bare
Awaiting, patient, till another pass.

The world is mirror to my Lady's soul,
Reflects her pains upon its solid face.
Her pleasures too are shown upon the sand
And all her sighs, in striving for her goal,
Amongst the clay and dust assume a place
And for a moment rest upon the land.
The Hand of God then sweeps across the plane,
Prepares the surface to reflect again.

--James Marshall Frank

ALFRED STARR

13. Alfred Starr

Alfred Starr was born in Nashville, July 14, 1898, and has lived there ever since. He was educated at the Universities of Vanderbilt, Harvard, and Dijon, France. He is married and has three children, and says of himself, "I am not a writer--that is not a literary man. My role at the Fugitive meetings was limited to listening and criticizing, habits I learned as an undergraduate at Harvard. My interest in modern poetry these many years after is slight--my interest in Agrarianism (an economic thesis which has intrigued some of the original Fugitives) is nil."[1]

Mr. Starr has published many books, all of which are in the nature of collaborations in the field of mathematics.[2]

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[1] Letter from Mr. Starr, April 2, 1938.

[2] Information received from Mr. Milton Starr (brother of Alfred Starr).

STANLEY JOHNSON

14. Stanley Johnson

Stanley Johnson was born in Nashville, Tennessee, November 5, 1892. He obtained his B.S. and M.A. degrees from Vanderbilt University and remained some time after his graduation as an instructor in the department of English. Mr. Johnson has written short stories as well as poetry. He is also the author of two novels, The Professor (Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1925), and The Immortal Wanderer (Lieber and Lewis, 1924). Mr. Johnson has been a reporter on the Nashville Banner but it has been impossible to find more information about his present interests and occupations, since letters addressed to him are returned to sender. His poem, An Intellectual's Funeral, gives us one clue to his philosophy.[1]

On such a day we put him in a box
And carried him to that last house, the grave;
All round the people walked upon the streets
Without once thinking that he had gone.
Their hard heels clacked upon the pavement stones.

A voiceless change had muted all his thoughts
To a deep significance we could not know;
And yet we knew that he knew all at last.
We heard with grave wonder the falling clods,
And with grave wonder met the loud day.

The night would come and day, but we had died.
With new green dos the melancholy gate
Was closed and locked, and we went pitiful,
Our clacking heels upon the pavement stones
Did knock and knock for Death to let us in.

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[1] Vol. I, No. 1.

JESSE ELY WILLS

JESSE ELY WILLS

15. Jesse Ely Wills

Jesse Ely Wills was born August 31, 1899, in Nashville, Tennessee. He attended the city schools, Wallace Preparatory School and Vanderbilt University, where he received his B.A. degree with the class of 1922. Further information about Mr. Wills was unobtainable.

Trinity

Around the tower-looming tree
Paced an apge, a man, and God.
Strange as dream or memory
In an orbit there they trod

Through a gloom where leaves aflutter
Kept somewhere numberless a throng
Whence voices drifted, a broken mutter,
Quarrel, cry, and wailing song.

Red-eyed in a nostriled face
And knuckling on a bludgeon arm,
The ape came, bowing to his place
Man whose glances of alarm

Leaped to joy in journeyings
From stars night errant to the sod;
Heralded by chiming wings
Gleamed the ivory limbs of God.

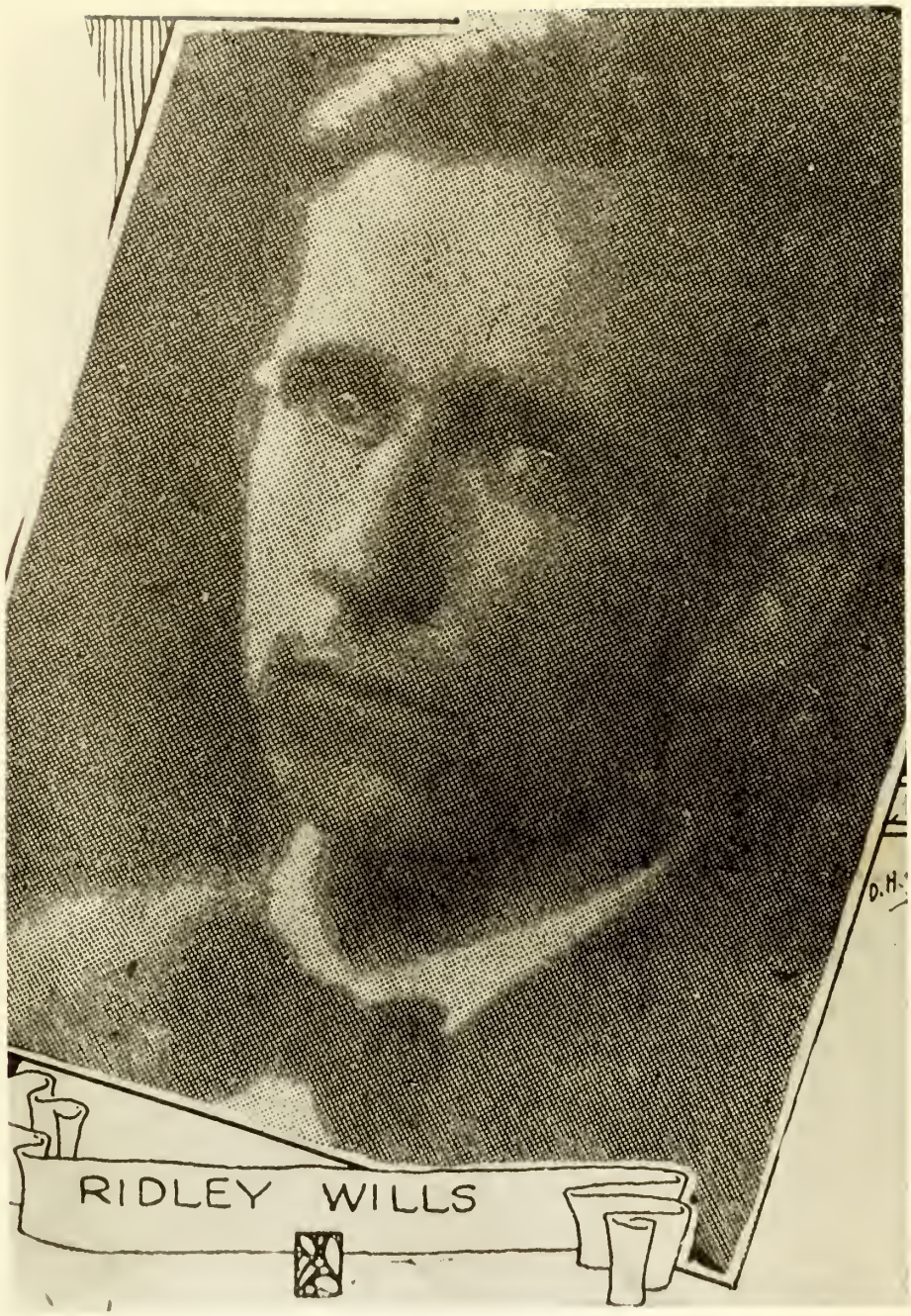
While rattling still the voices came:
"O Blasphemy! The beast's a lie."
And mockery tangled with acclaim
To trip the man who faltered by.

And for the boding, chiseled grace,
The eyes that burned the halo breath
To fix the lightning years of space,
One whisper: "Hide, the face of Death."

So God bemused in dreams of birth,
Man with his back to deity,
And ape, all shaggy as the earth,
Wove with its wrinkles round the tree.

Were these the first, were those the last,
Hairy, human, holy, feet?
I pondered while went dancing past
Father, son, and paraclete.

RIDLEY WILLS


RIDLEY WILLS

16. Ridley Wills

Ridley Wills was born in Brownsville, Tennessee, 1897. He attended Vanderbilt University and obtained his A.B. in 1923. He is the author of two novels, The Hoax,[1] published anonymously; and Harvey Landrum.[2] He has been a reporter on the Memphis-Scimitar, Memphis, Tennessee. His present occupation is unknown.

The Experimenter[3]

I seek a red heart
To hold in my hands
To fondle till it wears out,
Or grip till it whitens.

I want to mould it--
Curiously whistling--
Merely to model it
To suit my futile fancy.

I'd like to shade it--
And see its colour-changes,
And laugh through my nose
While I'd give it grotesqueness

Of course I should leave it--
Desert it forgetfully--
When there were left of it
Only dimensions;

Leave it for a craftsman
With skill less than I have;
A god-needed artisan,
Keen-eyed for material,

Who'd own simple honesty
And weak, useful selflessness
As philtre for the pale heart
That gleamed in virginity.

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[1] New York: Simon and Schuster, 1924.
[2] New York: Doran, 1922.
[3] Vol. I, No. 4.

And though he would cloister it
And mend it and cherish it
And gorge it into wholesomeness
To parade statuesquely,

I should not envy him
All would be vague as Life,
Save a fresh mindfulness
Of pride for my artistry.

PART IV

CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM

"De gustibus non disputandum"

PART IV

CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM

"To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets", according to Ben Jonson.[1] Today we have some critics who are poets, others who are critics alone, and still others who are a combination of critic and poet. Some of these critics may still call the muses "the strumpets of the theater",[2] and others less harsh in their judgment and more cosmopolitan in their artistic perceptions welcome the work of the muses and pass their judgment with wisdom and understanding. The question "What shall be the subject matter of poetry?" has been asked since the time of Dante.[3] Salus, Venus, and Virtus (love of country, love of women, and love of God) were the only subjects that Dante considered suitable for poetry. He also believed with the Moderns that magnitude of thought was more important than form or style. Ever since his time poets and critics have reiterated this question, each answering according to his own personality and his own understanding of true poetry. Julius Caesar Scaliger says "The function of the poet is to create another material world either better or worse than our own".[4]

The Fugitives were exposed to all types of critics, whose dicta

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[1] Ben Jonson, Timber (ed. Schelling), p. 80.

[2] Boëthius, Consolation of Philosophy.

[3] De Vulgari Eloquentia, Book I, Chap. 16.

[4] Poetics (1561).

follow. Some of this criticism was caustic, some commentary, and some encouraging. Braithwaite writing of poetry magazines in general has this to say:

"If I seem touched with the mood of pessimism it is, be assured, justified to a degree and yet not so bad as it seems. One cannot wade through hundreds and hundreds of poems, that are printed in the seventeen poetry magazines published in this country, and not be a bit discouraged at the dull routine of verse-making which so often makes up the contents of these publications. Scores and scores of hitherto unheard and unknown names are ascribed to verses which make one question the sanity and soundness of trusting editorial management to poets. Indeed, poetry magazines for the special encouragement of the art were, only a few years ago, something to be fostered. Now the multiplication of poetry magazines is a question of serious import for those who would add to the number now being published. For one reason, they are chiefly the organs of groups, and since they must rely upon the members of the group for financial support to exist, the groups and those in sympathy and contact with them find an easy entrance of work into their pages. I am speaking of the general run of these magazines; there are exceptions here and there in which the group has been fortunate in the assembling and cohesion of its talents. An example I have in mind is the Fugitive, published at Nashville, Tennessee. This poetry magazine displayed more character and originality during the last year than any poetry magazine in the country. One found often in its pages themes, and the treatment of themes, that were often too strong with the tang of originality. There was, nevertheless, time and again, power of vision, and the very certain

note of individuality. The contents of the Fugitive were largely made up, month after month, by the same writers, and among them men like John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Stanley Johnson, Merrill Moore, and Donald Davidson, gave to its pages a succession of brilliantly individual work. This group seems wholly absorbed in functioning artistically and wasting no energy on propaganda or self-advertising. These men are going to be heard from in no uncertain accents when the clamor of pride and authority have subsided in certain literary capitols."[1]

Mr. Braithwaite[2] again mentions the Fugitives in a favorable way. He says:

"To the Fugitive, of Nashville, Tennessee, I want again to offer my congratulations for producing the most distinctive poetry magazine in America. I think it is the best edited of them all; its editors are a group of poets including John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Stanley Johnson, Laura Riding Gottschalk and Allen Tate, every one of whom is a poet of rare significance and achievement. If the group has a metaphysical tendency, beneath and quite close to the surface, the crystallized expression is a strange and fascinating variety of intellectual coloring. They have dared confidently, and with alluring power, to employ forms both teased and forced out of various metrical elements, and are romantically aided by a symbolically vivid selection of uncommon words, achieving a result that has more spirit and nerve than is to be found in any other group-expression in the country."

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[1] Anthology of Magazine Verse (1923).

[2] Introduction to Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1925.

In an attempt to explain the reason for the rise of poetry in the South, James Southall Wilson declares[1]:

"The freedom of the intellect in the South from old superstitions, taboos, and prejudiced restrictions is not complete; but a new birth of poetry has certainly come in the last two decades. It is the result of part of the impact upon poetic minds of the nation-wide interest in contemporary poetry; in part of a group of enthusiastic leaders; but chiefly, I think, as distinguished from the rest of the country, or more liberal thinking and generally quickened intellectual life. Groups like the Poetry Societies of South Carolina and Virginia and the coteries that were behind the Fugitive at Nashville, and The Double Dealer in New Orleans stimulated the movement, but as always individuals were more important than organizations. The presence of poets in Charleston and Columbus like Du Bose Heyward, Hervey Allen, Beatrice Ravenel and Henry Bellamann; in Norfolk, like Virginia McCormick, Mary Sinton Leitch, Virginia Tunstall and John R. Moreland; in Nashville, like John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Donald Davidson, explain the poetic movements of those centers more than the poetic movements explain them."

Dr. Edwin Mims, writing of Southern literary magazines, mentions the Fugitive as one of the most outstanding. He says:

"Because I have the opportunity to know intimately the Nashville group of poets, generally recognized as one of the most significant groups now writing poetry in this country, I shall use them as an illustra-

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[1] "Poetry of the South", published in Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1926.

tion of what is being done by the younger writers. Sidney Lanier once wrote to Bayard Taylor that he suffered with being totally unacquainted with other literary men; the Fugitive group is an illustration of co-operation and has some of the characteristics of Oliver Wendell Holmes' Mutual Admiration Society."[1]

In spite of much ridicule from the general public, who contended that they could not understand the poems, the Fugitive has been praised almost extravagantly by critics like Louis Untermeyer, William Rose Benet, and W. S. Braithwaite.

The latter selected twenty-three of the Fugitive poems for his Anthology of American Verse (1932), and singled them out for special praise in his review of American poetry for the year.

Another well-known critic who has praised the Fugitives is Louis Untermeyer. In the preface of his Modern American Poetry, he says:

"In a preceding section mention was made of the spirit animating the new South. Apart from the short-lived Carolina local color school and the work of the previously considered Negro poets, the most important group centered about Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. It was never explained what the fugitives were fleeing to escape, and it soon became apparent that there were differences of taste and temperament among the members. But a sense of their backgrounds, a sympathy beyond an ear for quaint localisms, bound them together. This unannounced expression of unity--a union of old dreams and new issues--was to develop into a controversy centering about Agrarianism, but it began with poetry

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[1]Edwin Mims, The Advancing South (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1926), II, 356.

and it was on poetry that the group maintained itself.

"The outstanding excellence of the Nashville group was its free use of the discord--juxtaposing the traditionally poetic and the common colloquiality--and the establishment of a sharp-edged diction. In thought as well as technique it emphasized intelligence; it insisted on adult poetry as against the plethora of pretty, thoughtless, and immature verse written by adults. Its chief defect was a too frequent retreat into a remote classicism; with its metaphysical predilections the poetry sometimes became recondite and even incomprehensible. The stock of subjects grew low and, as John Gould Fletcher concluded in an otherwise sympathetic consideration of the school,'"the Southern type" of poem tends to become distorted, fragmentary, obscure, the more the poets speculate on the intellectual content as opposed to the emotional, or sensible, content of their subject matter.' But the best of this poetry rose above its limitations and cleared a direction of its own."[1]

In another part of the same book (p. 435) Mr. Untermeyer refers to the Fugitive as "That bravely, exceptional journal which did so much to disprove Mencken's contention that the 'Solid South' was a vast 'Sahara of the Beaux Arts.'" He also speaks of the Fugitive as "that curiously provocative little monthly which put Nashville on the literary map".

The Bookman of June 1928 calls the Fugitives "poets gifted with that mixture of emotional responsiveness and intellectual vitality

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[1] Pp. 25-26.

that is so peculiarly exhilarating".

Dozens of other critical articles on the Fugitives were published in such magazines as the London Poetry Review, London Mercury, Current Opinion, Literary Digest, New York Times, Boston Monitor, and New York Herald Tribune.

William S. Knickerbocker says in the "Fugitive of Nashville"[1]:

"The formation of the now well-known Fugitive of Nashville, Tennessee, is a literary episode in the cultural history of the United States. I do not recall in the history of American poetry, a deliberately designed orchestration of poets, convening as in an academy like those of the 18th century Italy. That their poetic achievements are aesthetically important is an open question; but, because some of them have obtained at least national recognition, it is opportune to investigate the nature and quality of their work. The aesthetic theory they evolved and the kind of poetry they produced are so unlike that of Amy Lowell and the Imagists that they may safely be considered to be potent sappers in undermining the effects of Imagism in American poetry.

"The Fugitives have by the publication of their first Anthology marked the end of their novitiate; is it too much to ask that they continue their discussions of philosophy and poetry so that the high art of poetry may, partly through their efforts, be delivered from the chaos into which it seems inevitably falling, through the caprices and the 'absoluteness' the eccentricities of some American practitioners of the art?"

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[1] Sewanee Review, April-June no., 1928, p. 211.

The Saturday Review of Literature[1] concerning the Fugitives says: "The Fugitives were a strong group. They specialized in the peculiar. They evoked originality and developed an unusual amount of talent in a short space of time. They have been distinctly significant in the development of American poetry since the war, illustrating one definite trend. Subscribers to their journal should preserve its files. Several of the names that appeared therein regularly are likely to be of some permanence in American literature."

Another pith and favorable comment was made by Mark Van Doren analyzing the group and their poems: "They were true amateurs meeting for a purely practical purpose and giving one another purely practical help. It is not surprising, then, that they stumbled upon the real thing or that they made a permanent contribution to American poetry. Intricate both in form and content, these poems will produce that kind of pleasure the reader has not known if his contact has been only with the widely advertised schools of American poetry.

"The way of writing poetry chosen by the Fugitives is one of the best ways--it wasthe way, incidently, of the 13th century Italian poets, of the symbolists in France, and of certain late 19th century English and Irish poets. It is the way of friendship and discussion, it is the way of the amateur society."[2]

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[1] Henry Seidel Canby; June 23, 1928.

[2] Books and Plays Section, The Nation, March 14, 1928.

The Fugitives won continued recognition for themselves and year after year criticism of them was found in literary publications, newspapers, anthologies, and books. Even as carping a critic as H. L. Mencken conceded that the Fugitive constituted at present the entire literature of Tennessee.[1]

The publication of the Fugitive Anthology[2] brought forth fresh and more vigorous criticism. Articles about these poets appeared in: The Nation, CCXVI (1928); The Bookman, LXVII (1928); The Dial, LXXXIV (1928); Saturday Review of Literature (1928); The New Republic, LIV (1928).

There has been published much criticism of the individual poets by non-members of the group and by the poets about each other. However, since this study is about the magazine itself and about the group a re-statement of these critical articles would add little to this study.

The consensus of opinion and criticism about the Fugitives has been favorable and most of the critics agree with the following telegram sent to the Vanderbilt University Masquerader, December 9, 1933:

> Ever since the founding of the Fugitives I have been insisting that the members constitute the most individual and important cultural group not only in the South but in America today. I emphasized this in my Boston lecture last night. I pointed out that while the Group developed distinct personalities, the distinction has derived from an integrated force and a common compulsion. It isasignificant thing that this compulsion was poetic as well as precise. Undoubtedly John Crowe Ransom is a powerful and convincing dialectician, Donald Davidson a fighting agrarian, Allen Tate the most brilliant

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[1] Nashville Tennessean, January 29, 1923.

[2] New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928.

of younger critics, and Merrill Moore the richest and most spontaneous of improvisers. But all of these are preëminently poets. It is with poetry that the Fugitives began, and it is as poets that they will persist.

Louis Untermeyer

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

This investigation was undertaken with nine purposes in view.[1] All of these purposes have been accomplished in as thorough a manner as was possible for me in consideration of the available material.

Sixteen amateur poets organized in a group in Nashville, Tennessee, for the purpose of reading, writing, and criticizing poetry. In April 1922 the Fugitive was established and existed until December 1925. During these four years of activity nineteen copies of the magazine were published.

A total of 421 poems was published by the Fugitive during its lifetime. 319 of these poems were written by the Fugitives themselves, while 102 of them were written by non-Fugitive contributors. The Fugitive group increased its membership from nine in 1922 to fifteen in 1924. The following table shows the number of poems of each member of the group:

	Poems
Walter Clyde Curry	8
Donald Davidson	49
James M. Frank	4
Sidney Mttron-Hirsch	5
Stanley Johnson	28

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[1] See "Purposes and Ideals" in this study.

	Poems
Merrill Moore	50
John Crowe Ransom	55
Alec B. Stevenson	17
Allen Tate	37
William Yandell Elliott	7
William Frierson	2
Jesse Ely Wills	12
Ridley Wills	5
Laura Riding Gottschalk	23
Robert Penn Warren	17
Total	319

The background and education of the members of the Fugitive group were very similar. They were about equally Jews and Christians in number. Besides writing poetry, many of them are well-known writers of prose, critical review, and literary and political essays. The first book reviews of Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren appeared in the Fugitive.

As the years pass we see the Group continuing to work in the literary field steadily producing, and at the same time earning their living, usually in a professional capacity. One of the members, Merrill Moore, is now practicing as a progressive young psychiatrist in Boston. Several are university professors and instructors. They are definitely alive to contemporary American life and its problems. Several of the members of the group have shown aggressive and active interest in Agrarianism.

Today the united efforts of Messrs. Tate, Ransom, Davidson, and Robert Penn Warren are not to produce anthologies of poetry, but to promote Agrarianism in their native section. Since 1922 Donald Davidson has written at least forty-five articles, book reviews, essays, books, John Crowe Ransom at least forty, Allen Tate sixty, and Robert Penn Warren twenty. Merrill Moore has produced over 50,000 sonnets and is probably the most prolific poet in the world.

The welfare and future of the South are of vital interest to all the members. Whether it becomes totally an industrialism like the North, totally agricultural as many Southerners desire, or a combination of both, which seems the most logical, will ultimately be evolved. Whatever is the outcome, the Fugitives will be alert to its needs and welfare. Although they did flee from the traditions of sentimental literature of the South and felt that a good poet need not necessarily be regional from a patriotic and political standpoint, they are loyal to the South. The Fugitives were and still are a vital representative poetic group. The South or any other region of America should be proud to claim them. They are thinkers and doers; they deserve fame, respect, and recognition in a world so fully of apathy and inertia. They have the ambition and perseverance to write poems and criticisms that are published and read and criticized by thousands. Whether great poets or small, they help to hold up the torch between literary generations of the past and the future.

"Nothing is more difficult to predict than the future of any poetry. The development which depends on the incident of genius in human minds must be willful, fitful, and uncertain. However, if a delicate plant of

genius encounters sunshine rather than frost, if it is fed and watered by the interest of an enthusiastic though not necessarily large public, by groups gathering together and stimulating progress with praise and criticism, the result may be so remarkable a development as we have had in the United States during the last quarter century, the movement whose great way has not yet spent itself and may roll in further evidence of its power before receding in an ebb tide."[1]

Donald Davidson, now a Vanderbilt professor, presents in a paragraph the crux of the contemporary poetic situation: "Nothing in the history of poetry is so remarkable as its variety and flexibility. Yet while new forms are always being added, few disappear, and thus literature is constantly being enriched. The strangest thing in contemporary poetry is that innovation and conservatism exist side by side. It will probably always be so!"[2]

Neuroticism has been one of the characteristics we have been taught to believe many of the older traditional poets possessed. The Fugitives seldom seem neurotic in their poetry, and may disprove the theory that "divine madness"[3] is a necessary part of the true makeup of a poet. They neither "transport or move with passion"[4] but appear to portray life as they see it without themselves becoming emotionally involved. They do

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[1] A Poet's Life, p. 470. Author's underscoring.

[3] Longinus, "On the Sublime" (ed. by Rhys Roberts, 1899).

[2] Fugitive, Vol. IV, No. 4, p. 128.

[4] Longinus, "On the Sublime" (ed. by Rhys Roberts, 1899).

not take on the "identification" of their suffering subjects but rather diagnose, prescribe, and give a prognosis in a scientific unemotional manner.

The unusual method of criticism of the Fugitives is a very important feature of this group. Other magazines were being issued at the same time--The Double Dealer from New Orleans and Poetry from Chicago. Yet nowhere else in America is the same method of criticism known to have been used. Each depended on the help of the others in order to achieve.[1]

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[1]Various agreeing sources.

FUGITIVE UNBOUND

Into my soul I groped one day,
As if I found it there at rest;
In timorous, quivering dream it lay,--
All that of me was best.

I found it bound to the soilured sin
Anointment unholy of lust,--
I snatched it from the thoughts of men,
And to the Lord gave trust.

From its dream it rose with a quaking cry,
And broke the shackles free!
With a bound it mounted to the sky.
Now, Lord, it rhythms Thee!

--James M. Frank

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